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POEMS

17

GEORGE MEREDITH

(Lytton, Edward Robert Bulwer)

LONDON

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ODES

IN CONTRIBUTION TO THE SONG OF FRENCH HISTORY

THE REVOLUTION

I

Not yet had History's Ætna smoked the skies,
And low the Gallic Giantess lay enchained,
While overhead in ordered set and rise,
Her kingly crowns immutably defiled;
Effulgent on funereal piled
Across the vacant heavens, and distrained
Her body, mutely, even as earth, to bear;
Despoiled the tomb of hope, her mouth of air.

II

Through marching scores of winters racked she lay,
Beneath a hoar-frost's brilliant crust;
Whereon the jewelled flies that drained
Her breasts disported in a glistering spray;
She, the land's fount of fruits, enclosed with dust;
By good and evil angels fed, sustained
In part to curse, in part to pray,
Sucking the dubious rumours, till men saw

The throbs of her charged heart before the Just,
So worn the harrowed surface had become:
And still they deemed the dance above was Law,
Amort all passion in a rebel dumb.

III

Then on the unanticipated day,
Earth heaved, and rose a veinous mound
To roar of the underfloods; and off it sprang,
Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,
A splendid Mænad, she of the delirious laugh,
Her body twisted flames with the smoke-cap crowned;
She of the Bacchic foot; the challenger to the fray,
Bewitchment for the embrace; who sang, who sang
Intoxication to her swarm,
Revolved them, hair, voice, feet, in her carmagnole,
As with a stroke she snapped the Royal staff,
Dealt the awaited blow on gilt decay
(O ripeness of the time! O Retribution sure,
If but our vital lamp illume us to endure!)
And, like a glad releasing of her soul,
Sent the word Liberty up to meet the midway blue,
Her bridegroom in descent to her; and they joined,
In the face of men they joined: attest it true,

The million witnesses, that she
For ages lying beside the mole,
Was on the unanticipated miracle day
Upraised to midway heaven and, as to her goal
Enfolded, ere the Immaculate knew
What Lucifer of the Mint had coined
His bride's adulterate currency
Of burning love corrupt of an infuriate hate;
She worthy, she unworthy; that one day his mate:
His mate for that one day of the unwritten deed.
Read backward on the hoar-frost's brilliant crust;
Beneath it read.
Athirst to kiss, athirst to slay, she stood,
A radiance fringed with grim affright;
For them that hungered, she was nourishing food,
For those who sparkled, Night.
Read in her heart, and how before the Just
Her doings, her misdoings, plead.

IV

Down on her leap for him the young Angelical broke
To husband a resurgent France:
From whom, with her dethroning stroke,
Dishonour passed; the dalliance,

That is occasion's yea or nay,
In issues for the soul to pay,
Discarded; and the cleft 'twixt deed and word,
The sinuous lie which warbles the sweet bird,
Wherein we see old Darkness peer,
Cold Dissolution beck, she had flung hence;
And hence the talons and the beak of prey;
Hence all the lures to silken swine
Thronging the troughs of indolence;
With every sleek convolvement serpentine;
The pride in elfin arts to veil an evil leer,
And bid a goatfoot trip it like a fay.
He clasped in this revived, uprisen France,
A valorous dame, of countenance
The lightning's upon cloud: unlit as yet
On brows and lips the lurid shine
Of seas in the night-wind's whirl; unstirred
Her pouch of the centuries' injuries compressed;
The shriek that tore the world as yet unheard:
Earth's animate full flower she looked, intense
For worship, wholly given him, fair
Adoring or desiring; in her bright jet,
Earth's crystal spring to sky: Earth's warrior Best
To win Heaven's Pure up that midway

We vision for new ground, where sense
And spirit are one for the further flight; breast-bare,
Bare-limbed; nor graceless gleamed her disarray
In scorn of the seductive insincere,
But martially nude for hot Bellona's play,
And amorous of the loftiest in her view.

V

She sprang from dust to drink of earth's cool dew,
The breath of swaying grasses share,
Mankind embrace, their weaklings rear,
At wrestle with the tyrannic strong;
Her forehead clear to her mate, virgin anew,
As immortals may be in the mortal sphere.
Read through her launching heart, who had lain long
With Earth and heard till it became her own,
Our good Great Mother's eve and matin song:
The humming burden of Earth's toil to feed
Her creatures all, her task to speed their growth,
Her aim to lead them up her pathways, shown
Between the Pains and Pleasures; warned of both,
Of either aided on their hard ascent.
Now when she looked with love's benign delight
After great ecstasy, along the plains,

What foulest impregnation of her sight
Transformed the scene to multitudinous troops
Of human sketches, quaver-figures, bent,
As were they winter sedges, broken hoops,
Dry udders, vineless poles, worm-eaten posts,
With features like the flowers defaced by deluge rains?
Recked she that some perverting devil had limned
Earth's proudest to spout scorn of the Maker's hand,
Who could a day behold these deathly hosts.
And see, decked, graced, and delicately trimmed
A ribanded and gemmed elected few,
Sanctioned, of milk and honey starve the land:—
Like melody in flesh, its pleasant game
Olympianwise perform, cloak but the shame:
Beautiful statures; hideous,
By Christian contrast; pranked with golden chains,
And flexile where is manhood straight;
Mortuaries where warm should beat
The brotherhood that keeps blood sweet:
Who dared in cantique impious
Proclaim the Just, to whom was due
Cathedral gratitude in the pomp of state,
For that on those lean outcasts hung the sucker Pains,
On these elect the swelling Pleasures grew.

Surely a devil's land when that meant death for each!
Fresh from the breast of Earth, not thus,
With all the body's life to plump the leech,
Is Nature's way, she knew. The abominable scene
Spat at the skies; and through her veins,
To cloud celestially sown,
Ran venom of what nourishment
Her dark sustainer subterrene
Supplied her, stretched supine on the rack,
Alive in the shrewd nerves, the seething brains,
Under derisive revels, prone
As one clamped fast, with the interminable senseless
blent.

VI

Now was her face white waves in the tempest's sharp
flame-blink;
Her skies shot black.
Now was it visioned infamy to drink
Of earth's cool dew, and through the vines
Frolic in pearly laughter with her young,
Watching the healthful, natural, happy signs
Where hands of lads and maids like tendrils clung,
After their sly shy ventures from the leaf,

And promised bunches. Now it seemed
The world was one malarious mire,
Crying for purification: chief
This land of France. It seemed
A duteous desire
To drink of life's hot flood, and the crimson streamed.

VII

She drank what makes man demon at the draught.
Her skies lowered black,
Her lover flew,
There swept a shudder over men.
Her heavenly lover fled her, and she laughed,
For laughter was her spirit's weapon then.
The Infernal rose uncalled, he with his crew.

VIII

As mighty thews burst manacles, she went mad:
Her heart a flaring torch usurped her wits.
Such enemies of her next-drawn breath she had!
To tread her down in her live grave beneath
Their dancing floor sunned blind by the Royal wreath,
They ringed her steps with crafty prison pits.

Without they girdled her, made nest within.
There ramped the lion, here entrailed the snake.
They forced the cup to her lips when she drank blood;
Believing it, in the mother's mind at strain,
In the mother's fears, and in young Liberty's wail
Alarmed, for her encompassed children's sake,
The sole sure way to save her priceless bud.
Wherewith, when power had gifted her to prevail,
Vengeance appeared as logically akin.
Insanely rational they; she rationally insane;
And in compute of sin, was hers the appealing sin.

IX

Amid the plash of scarlet mud
Stained at the mouth, drunk with our common air,
Not lack of love was her defect;
The Fury mourned and raged and bled for France;
Breathing from exultation to despair
At every wild-winged hope struck by mischance
Soaring at each faint gleam o'er her abyss.
Heard still, to be heard while France shall stand erect,
The frontier march she piped her sons, for where
Her crouching outer enemy camped,

Attendant on the deadlier inner's hiss.
She piped her sons the frontier march, the wine
Of martial music, History's cherished tune;
And they, the saintliest labourers that aye
Dropped sweat on soil for bread, took arms and tramped;
High-breasted to match men or elements,
Or Fortune, harsh schoolmistress with the undrilled:
War's ragged pupils; many a wavering line,
Torn from the dear fat soil of champaigns hopefully tilled,
Torn from the motherly bowl, the homely spoon,
To jest at famine, ply
The novel scythe, and stand to it on the field;
Lie in the furrows, rain-clouds for their tents;
Fronting the red artillery straighten spine;
Buckle the shiver at sight of comrades strewn;
Over an empty platter affect the merrily filled;
Die, if the multiple hazards around said die;
Downward measure a foeman mightily sized;
Laugh at the legs that would run for a life despised;
Lyrical on into death's red roaring jaw-gape, steeled
Gaily to take of the foe his lesson, and give reply.
Cheerful apprentices, they shall be masters soon!

X

Lo, where hurricane flocks of the North-wind rattle
their thunder
Loud through a night, and at dawn comes change to
the great South-west,
Hounds are the hounded in clouds, waves, forests,
inverted the race:
Lo, in the day's young beams the colossal invading
pursuers
Burst upon rocks and were foam;
Ridged up a torrent crest;
Crumbled to ruin, still gazing a glacial wonder;
Turned shamed feet toe to heel on their track at a
panic pace.
Yesterday's clarion cock scudded hen of the invalid
comb;
They, the triumphant tonant towering upper, were
under;
They, violators of home, dared hope an inviolate home.
They that had stood for the stroke were the vigorous
hewers;
Quick as the trick of the wrist with the rapier, they
the pursuers.

Heavens and men amazed heard the arrogant crying
for grace;
Saw the once hearth-reek rabble the scourge of an
army dispieced;
Saw such a shift of the hunt as when Titan Olympus
clomb.
Fly! was the sportsman's word; and the note of the
quarry rang, Chase!

XI

Banners from South, from East,
Sheaves of pale banners drooping hole and shred;
The captive brides of valour, Sabine Wives
Plucked from the foeman's blushful bed,
For glorious muted battle-tongues
Of deeds along the horizon's red,
At cost of unreluctant lives;
Her toilful heroes homeward poured,
To give their fevered mother air of the lungs.
She breathed, and in the breathing craved.
Environed as she was, at bay,
Safety she kissed on her drawn sword,
And waved for victory, for fresh victory waved:

She craved for victory as her daily bread;
For victory as her daily banquet raved.

XII

Now had her glut of vengeance left her grey
Of blood, who in her entrails fiercely tore
To clutch and squeeze her snakes; herself the more
Devitalizing: red was her Auroral ray;
Desired if but to paint her pallid hue.
The passion for that young horizon red,
Which dowered her with the flags, the blazing fame,
Like dotage of the past-meridian dame
For some bright Sungod adolescent, swelled
Insatiate, to the voracious grew,
The glutton's inward raveners bred;
Till she, mankind's most dreaded, most abhorred,
Witless in her demands on Fortune, asked,
As by the weaving Fates impelled,
To have the thing most loathed, the iron lord,
Controller and chastiser, under Victory masked.

XIII

Banners from East, from South.
She hugged him in them, feared the scourge they meant,

Yet blindly hugged, and hungering built his throne.
So may you see the village innocent,
With curtsey of shut lids and open mouth,
In act to beg for sweets expect a loathly stone:
See furthermore the Just in his measures weigh
Her sufferings and her sins, dispense her meed.
False to her bridegroom lord of the miracle day,
She fell: from his ethereal home observed
Through love, grown alien love, not moved to plead
Against the season's fruit for deadly Seed,
But marking how she had aimed, and where she swerved,
Why suffered, with a sad consenting thought.
Nor would he shun her sullen look, nor monstrous hold
The doer of the monstrous; she aroused,
She, the long tortured, suddenly freed, distraught,
More strongly the divine in him than when
Joy of her as she sprang from mould
Drew him the midway heavens adown
To clasp her in his arms espoused
Before the sight of wondering men,
And put upon the day a deathless crown.
The veins and arteries of her, fold in fold,
His alien love laid open, to divide

The martyred creature from her crimes; he knew
What cowardice in her valour could reside;
What strength her weakness covered; what abased
Sublimity so illumining, and what raised
This wallower in old slime to noblest heights,
Up to the union on the midway blue:—
Day that the celestial grave Recorder hangs
Among dark History's nocturnal lights,
With vivid beams indicative to the quick
Of all who have felt the vaulted body's pangs
Beneath a mind in hopeless soaring sick.
She had forgot how, long enslaved, she yearned
To the one helping hand above;
Forgot her faith in the Great Undiscerned,
Whereof she sprang aloft to her Angelical love
That day: and he, the bright day's husband, still with love,
Though alien, though to an upper seat retired,
Beheld a wrangling heart, as 'twere her soul
On eddies of wild waters cast;
In wilderness division; fired
For domination, freedom, lust,
The Pleasures; lo, a witch's snaky bowl
Set at her lips; the blood-drinker's madness fast

Upon her; and therewith mistrust,
Most of herself: a mouth of guile.
Compassionately could he smile,
To hear the mouth disclaiming God,
And clamouring for the Just!
Her thousand impulses, like torches, coursed
City and field; and pushed abroad
O'er hungry waves to thirsty sands,
Flaring at further; she had grown to be
The headless with the fearful hands;
To slaughter, else to suicide enforced.
But he, remembering how his love began,
And of what creature, pitied when was plain
Another measure of captivity
The need for strap and rod:
The penitential prayers again;
Again the bitter bowing down to dust;
The burden on the flesh for who disclaims the God,
The answer when is call upon the Just.
Whence her lost virtue had found refuge strode
Her master, saying, 'I only; I who can!'
And echoed round her army, now her chain.
So learns the nation closing Anarch's reign,
That she had been in travail of a Man.

NAPOLÉON

I

Cannon his name,
Cannon his voice, he came.
Who heard of him heard shaken hills,
An earth at quake, to quiet stamped;
Who looked on him beheld the will of wills,
The driver of wild flocks where lions ramped:
Beheld War's liveries flee him, like lumped grass
Nid-nod to ground beneath the cuffing storm;
While laurelled over his Imperial form,
Forth from her bearded tube of lacquey brass,
Reverberant notes and long blew volant Fame.
Incarnate Victory, Power manifest,
Infernal or God-given to mankind,
On the quenched volcano's cusp did he take stand,
A conquering army's height above the land,
Which calls that army offspring of its breast,
And sees it mid the starry camps enshrined;
His eye the cannon's flame,
The cannon's cave his mind.

II

To weld the nation in a name of dread,
And scatter carrion flies off wounds unhealed,
The Necessitated came, as comes from out
Electric ebon lightning's javelin-head,
Threatening annihilation in the revealed
Founts of our being; terrible with doubt,
With radiance restorative. At one stride
Athwart the Law he stood for sovereign sway.
That Soliform made featureless beside
His brilliancy who neighboured: vapour they;
Vapour what postured statues barred his tread.
On high in amphitheatre field on field,
Italian, Egyptian, Austrian,
Far heard and of the carnage discord clear,
Bells of his escalading triumphs pealed
In crashes on a choral chant severe,
Heraldic of the authentic Charlemagne,
Globe, sceptre, sword, to enfold, to rule, to smite,
Make unity of the mass,
Coherent or refractory, by his might.

Forth from her bearded tube of lacquey brass,
Fame blew, and tuned the jangles, bent the knees

Rebellious or submissive; his decrees
Were thunder in those heavens and compelled:
Such as disordered earth, eclipsed of stars,
Endures for sign of Order's calm return,
Whereunto she is vowed; and his wreckage-spars,
His harried ships, old riotous Ocean lifts alight,
Subdued to splendour in his delirant churn.
Glory suffused the accordant, quelled,
By magic of high sovereignty, revolt:
And he, the reader of men, himself unread;
The name of hope, the name of dread;
Bloom of the coming years or blight;
An arm to hurl the bolt
With aim Olympian; bore
Likeness to Godhead. Whither his flashes hied
Hosts fell; what he constructed held rock-fast.
So did earth's abjects deem of him that built and clove.
Torch on imagination, beams he cast,
Whereat they hailed him deified:
If less than an eagle-speeding Jove, than Vulcan more.
Or it might be a Vulcan-Jove,
Europe for smithy, Europe's floor

Lurid with sparks in evanescent showers,
Loud echo-clap of hammers at all hours,
Our skies the reflex of its furnace blast.

III

On him the long enchained, released
For bride of the miracle day up the midway blue;
She from her heavenly lover fallen to serve for feast
Of rancours and raw hungers; she, the untrue,
Yet pitiable, not despicable, gazed.
Fawning her body bent, she gazed
With eyes the moonstone portals to her heart:
Eyes magnifying through hysteric tears
This apparition, ghostly for belief;
Demoniac or divine, but sole
Over earth's mightiest written Chief;
Earth's chosen, crowned, unchallengeable upstart:
The trumpet word to awake, transform, renew;
The arbiter of circumstance;
High above limitations, as the spheres.
Nor ever had heroical Romance,
Never ensanguined History's lengthened scroll,
Shown fulminant to shoot the levin dart
Terrific as this man, by whom upraised,

Aggrandized and begemmed, she outstripped her peers;
Like midnight's levying brazier-beacon blazed
Defiant to the world, a rally for her sons,
Day of the darkness; this man's mate; by him,
Cannon his name,
Rescued from vivisectionist and knave,
Her body's dominators and her shame;
By him with the rivers of ranked battalions, brave
Past mortal, girt: a march of swords and guns
Incessant; his proved warriors; loaded dice
He flung on the crested board, where chilly Fears
Behold the Reaper's ground, Death sitting grim,
Awatch for his predestined ones,
Mid shrieks and torrent-hooves; but these,
Inebriate of his inevitable device,
Hail it their hero's wood of lustrous laurel-trees,
Blossom and fruit of fresh Hesperides,
The boiling life-blood in their cheers.
Unequalled since the world was man they pour
A spiky girdle round her; these, her sons,
His cataracts at smooth holiday, soon to roar
Obstruction shattered at his will or whim:
Kind to her ear as quiring Cherubim,
And trampling earth like scornful mastodons.

IV

The flood that swept her to be slave
Adoring, under thought of being his mate,
These were, and unto the visibly unexcelled,
As much of heart as abjects can she gave,
Or what of heart the body bears for freight
When Majesty apparent overawes;
By the flash of his ascending deeds upheld,
Which let not feminine pride in him have pause
To question where the nobler pride rebelled.
She read the hieroglyphic on his brow,
Felt his firm hand to wield the giant's mace;
Herself whirled upward in an eagle's claws,
Past recollection of her earthly place;
And if cold Reason pressed her, called him Fate;
Offering abashed the servile woman's vow.
Delirium was her virtue when the look
At fettered wrists and violated laws
Faith in a rectitude Supernal shook,
Till worship of him shone as her last rational state,
The slave's apology for gemmed disgrace.
Far in her mind that leap from earth to the ghost
Midway on high; or felt as a troubled pool;

Or as a broken sleep that hunts a dream half lost,
Arrested and rebuked by the common school
Of daily things for truancy. She could rejoice
To know with wakeful eyeballs Violence
Her crowned possessor, and, on every sense
Incumbent, Fact, Imperial Fact, her choice,
In scorn of barren visions, aims at a glassy void.
Who sprang for Liberty once, found slavery sweet;
And Tyranny on alert subservience buoyed,
Spurred a blood-mare immeasureably fleet
To shoot the transient leagues in a passing wink,
Prompt for the glorious bound at the fanged abyss's
brink.
Scarce felt she that she bled when battle scored
On riddled flags the further conjured line;
From off the meteor gleam of his waved sword
Reflected bright in permanence: she bled
As the Bacchante spills her challengeing wine
With whirl o' the cup before the kiss to lip;
And bade drudge History in his footprints tread,
For pride of sword-strokes o'er slow penmanship:
Each step of his a volume: his sharp word
The shower of steel and lead
Or pastoral sunshine.

V

Persistent through the brazen chorus round
His thunderous footsteps on the foeman's ground,
A broken carol of wild notes was heard,
As when an ailing infant wails a dream.
Strange in familiarity it rang:
And now along the dark blue vault might seem
Winged migratories having but heaven for home,
Now the lone sea-bird's cry down shocks of foam,
Beneath a ruthless paw the captive's pang.

It sang the gift that comes from God
To mind of man as air to lung.
So through her days of under sod
Her faith unto her heart had sung,
Like bedded seed by frozen clod,
With view of wide-armed heaven and buds at burst
And midway up, Earth's fluttering little lyre.
Even for a glimpse, for even a hope in chained desire
The vision of it watered thirst.

VI

But whom those errant moans accused
As Liberty's murderous mother, cried accursed,
France blew to deafness: for a space she mused;

She smoothed a startled look, and sought,
From treasuries of the adoring slave,
Her surest way to strangle thought;
Picturing her dread lord decree advance
Into the enemy's land; artillery, bayonet, lance;
His ordering fingers point the dial's to time their ranks:
Himself the black storm-cloud, the tempest's bayonet-glaive.
Like foam-heads of a loosened freshet bursting banks,
By mount and fort they thread to swamp the sluggard plains.
Shines his gold-laurel sun, or cloak connivent rains.
They press to where the hosts in line and square throng mute;
He watchful of their form, the Audacious, the Astute;
Eagle to grip the field; to work his craftiest, fox.
From his brief signal, straight the stroke of the leveller falls;
From him those opal puffs, those arcs with the clouded balls:
He waves, and the voluble scene is a quagmire shifting blocks;

They clash, they are knotted, and now 'tis the deed
of the axe on the log;
Here away moves a spiky woodland, and yon away
sweep
Rivers of horse torrent-mad to the shock, and the heap
over heap
Right through the troughed black lines turned to
bunches or shreds, or a fog
Rolling off sunlight's arrows. Not mightier Phœbus
in ire,
Nor deadlier Jove's avengeing right hand, than he of
the brain
Keen at an enemy's mind to encircle and pierce and
constrain,
Muffling his own for a fate-charged blow very Gods
may admire.
Sure to behold are his eagles on high where the con-
flict raged.
Rightly, then, should France worship, and deafen the
disaccord
Of those who dare withstand an irresistible
sword
To thwart his predestined subjection of Europe. Let
them submit!

She said it aloud, and heard in her breast, as a singer caged,
With the beat of wings at bars, Earth's fluttering little lyre.
No more at midway heaven, but liker midway to the pit:
Not singing the spirally upward of rapture, the downward of pain
Rather, the drop sheer downward from pressure of merciless weight.

Her strangled thought got breath, with her worship held debate;
To yield and sink, yet eye askant the mark she had missed.
Over the black-blue rollers of that broad Westerly main,
Steady to sky, the light of Liberty glowed
In a flaming pillar, that cast on the troubled waters a road
For Europe to cross, and see the thing lost subsist.
For there 'twas a shepherd led his people, no butcher of sheep;
Firmly there the banner he first upreared

Stands to rally; and nourishing grain do his children reap
From a father beloved in life, in his death revered.
Contemplating him and his work, shall a skyward glance
Clearer sight of our dreamed and abandoned obtain;
Nay, but as if seen in station above the Republic, France
Had view of her one-day's heavenly lover again;
Saw him amid the bright host looking down on her; knew she had erred,
Knew him her judge, knew yonder the spirit preferred;
Yonder the base of the summit she strove that day to ascend,
Ere cannon mastered her soul, and all dreams had end.

VII

Soon felt she in her shivered frame
A bodeful drain of blood illume
Her wits with frosty fire to read
The dazzling wizard who would have her bleed
On fruitless marsh and snows of spectral gloom
For victory that was victory scarce in name.
Husky his clarions laboured, and her sighs

O'er slaughtered sons were heavier than the prize;
Recalling how he stood by Frederic's tomb,
With Frederic's country underfoot and spurned:
There meditated; till her hope might guess,
Albeit his constant star prescribe success,
The savage strife would sink, the civil aim
To head a mannered world breathe zephyrous
Of morning after storm; whereunto she yearned;
And Labour's lovely peace, and Beauty's courtly
bloom,
The mind in strenuous tasks hilarious.
At such great height, where hero hero topped,
Right sanely should the Grand Ascendant think
No further leaps at the fanged abyss's brink
True Genius takes: be battle's dice-box dropped!

She watched his desert features, hung to hear
The honey words desired, and veiled her face;
Hearing the Seaman's name recur
Wrathfully, thick with a meaning worse
Than call to the march: for that inveterate Purse
Could kindle the extinct, inform a vacant place,
Conjure a heart into the trebly felled.
It squeezed the globe, insufferably swelled

To feed insurgent Europe: rear and van
Were haunted by the amphibious curse;
Here flesh, there phantom, livelier after rout:
The Seaman piping aye to the rightabout,
Distracted Europe's Master, puffed remote
Those Indies of the swift Macedonian,
Whereon would Europe's Master somewhiles doat,
In dreamings on a docile universe
Beneath an immarcessible Charlemagne.

Nor marvel France should veil a seer's face,
And call on darkness as a blest retreat.
Magnanimously could her iron Emperor
Confront submission: hostile stirred to heat
All his vast enginery, allowed no halt
Up withered avenues of waste-blood war,
To the pitiless red mounts of fire afume,
As 'twere the world's arteries opened! Woe the race!
Ask wherefore Fortune's vile caprice should balk
His panther spring across the foaming salt,
From martial sands to the cliffs of pallid chalk!
There is no answer: seed of black defeat
She then did sow, and France nigh unto death fore-
doom.

See since that Seaman's epicycle sprite
Engirdle, lure and goad him to the chase
Along drear leagues of crimson spotting white
With mother's tears of France, that he may meet
Behind suborned battalions, ranked as wheat
Where peeps the weedy poppy, him of the sea;
Earth's power to baffle Ocean's power resume;
Victorious army crown o'er Victory's fleet;
And bearing low that Seaman upon knee,
Stay the vexed question of supremacy,
Obnoxious in the vault by Frederic's tomb.

VIII

Poured streams of Europe's veins the flood
Full Rhine or Danube rolls off morning-tide
Through shadowed reaches into crimson-dyed:
And Rhine and Danube knew her gush of blood
Down the plucked roots the deepest in her breast.
He tossed her cordials, from his laurels pressed.
She drank for dryness thirstily, praised his gifts.
The blooded frame a powerful draught uplifts,
Writhed the devotedness her voice rang wide
In cries ecstatic, as of the martyr-Blest,
Their spirits issuing forth of bodies racked,

And crazy chuckles, with life's tears at feud;
While near her heart the sunken sentinel
Called Critic marked, and dumb in awe reviewed
This torture, this anointed, this untracked
To mortal source, this alien of his kind;
Creator, slayer, conjuror, Solon-Mars,
The cataract of the abyss, the star of stars;
Whose arts to lay the senses under spell
Aroused an insurrectionary mind.

IX

He, did he love her? France was his weapon, shrewd
At edge, a wind in onset: he loved well
His tempered weapon, with the which he hewed
Clean to the ground impediments, or hacked,
Sure of the blade that served the great man-miracle.
He raised her, robed her, gemmed her for his bride,
Did but her blood in blindness given exact.
Her blood she gave, was blind to him as guide:
She quivered at his word, and at his touch
Was hound or steed for any mark he espied.
He loved her more than little, less than much.
The fair subservient of Imperial Fact
Next to his consanguineous was placed

In ranked esteem; above the diurnal meal,
Vexatious carnal appetites above,
Above his hoards, while she Imperial Fact embraced,
And rose but at command from under heel.
The love devolvent, the ascension love,
Receptive or profuse, were fires he lacked,
Whose marrow had expelled their wasteful sparks;
Whose mind, the vast machine of endless haste,
Took up but solids for its glowing seal.
The hungry love, that fish-like creatures feel,
Impelled for prize of hooks, for prey of sharks,
His night's first quarter sicklied to distaste,
In warm enjoyment barely might distract.
A head that held an Europe half devoured
Taste in the blood's conceit of pleasure soured.
Nought save his rounding aim, the means he plied,
Death for his cause, to him could point appeal.
His mistress was the thing of uses tried.
Frigid the netting smile on whom he wooed,
But on his Policy his eye was lewd.
That sharp long zig-zag into distance brooked
No foot across; a shade his ire provoked.
The blunder or the cruelty of a deed,
His Policy imperative could plead.

He deemed nought other precious, nor knew he
Legitimate outside his Policy.
Men's lives and works were due, from their birth's date,
To the State's shield and sword, himself the State.
He thought for them in mass, as Titan may;
For their pronounced well-being bade obey;
O'er each obstructive thicket thunderclapped,
And straight their easy road to market mapped.

Watched Argus to survey the huge preserves
He held or coveted; Mars was armed alert
At sign of motion; yet his brows were murk,
His gorge would surge, to see the butcher's work,
The Reaper's field; a sensitive in nerves.
He rode not over men to do them hurt.
As one who claimed to have for paramour
Earth's fairest form, he dealt the cancelling blow;
Impassioned, still impersonal; to ensure
Possession; free of rivals, not their foe.

The common Tyrant's frenzies, rancour, spites,
He knew as little as men's claim on rights.
A kindness for old servants, early friends,
Was constant in him while they served his ends;

And if irascible, 'twas the moment's reek
From fires diverted by some gusty freak.
His Policy the act which breeds the act
Previsèd, in issues accurately summed
From reckonings of men's tempers, terrors, needs:—
That universal army, which he leads
Who builds Imperial on Imperious Fact.
Within his hot brain's hammering workshop hummed
A thousand furious wheels at whirr, untired
As Nature in her reproductive throes;
And did they grate, he spake, and cannon fired:
The cause being aye the incendiary foes
Proved by prostration culpable. His dispense
Of Justice made his active conscience;
His passive was of ceaseless labour formed.
So found this Tyrant sanction and repose;
Humanly just, inhumanly unwarmed.

Preventive fencings with the foul intent
Occult, by him observed and foiled betimes,
Let fool historians chronicle as crimes.
His blows were dealt to clear the way he went:
Too busy sword and mind for needless blows.
The mighty bird of sky minutest grains

On ground perceived; in heaven but rays or rains;
In humankind diversities of masks,
For rule of men the choice of bait or goads.
The statesman steered the despot to large tasks;
The despot drove the statesman on short roads.
For Order's cause he laboured, as inclined
A soldier's training and his Euclid mind.
His army unto men he could present
As model of the perfect instrument.
That creature, woman, was the sofa soft,
When warriors their dusty armour doffed,
And read their manuals for the making truce
With rosy frailties framed to reproduce.
He farmed his land, distillingly alive
For the utmost extract he might have and hive,
Wherewith to marshal force; and in like scheme,
Benign shone Hymen's torch on young love's dream.
Thus to be strong was he beneficent;
A fount of earth, likewise a firmament.

The disputant in words his eye dismayed:
Opinions blocked his passage. Rent
Were Councils with a gesture; brayed
By hoarse camp-phrase what argument

Dared interpose to waken spleen
In him whose vision grasped the unseen,
Whose counsellor was the ready blade,
Whose argument the cannonade.
He loathed his land's divergent parties, loth
To grant them speech, they were such idle troops;
The friable and the grumous, dizzards both.
Men were good sticks his mastery wrought from hoops;
Some serviceable, none credible on oath.
The silly preference they nursed to die
In beds he scorned, and led where they should lie.
If magic made them pliable for his use,
Magician he could be by planned surprise.
For do they see the deuce in human guise,
As men's acknowledged head appears the deuce,
And they will toil with devilish craft and zeal.
Among them certain vagrant wits that had
Ideas buzzed; they were the feebly mad;
Pursuers of a film they hailed ideal;
But could be dangerous fire-flies for a brain
Subdued by fact, still amorous of the inane.
With a breath he blew them out, to beat their wings
The way of such transfeminated things,
And France had sense of vacancy in Light.

That is the soul's dead darkness, making clutch
Wild hands for aid at muscles within touch;
Adding to slavery's chain the stringent twist;
Even when it brings close surety that aright
She reads her Tyrant through his golden mist;
Perceives him fast to a harsher Tyrant bound;
Self-ridden, self-hunted, captive of his aim;
Material grandeur's ape, the Infernal's hound;
Enormous, with no infinite around;
No starred deep sky, no Muse, or lame
The dusty pattering pinions,
The voice as through the brazen tube of Fame.

X

Hugest of engines, a much limited man,
She saw the Lustrous, her great lord, appear
Through that smoked glass her last privation brought
To point her critic eye and spur her thought:
A heart but to propel Leviathan;
A spirit that breathed but in earth's atmosphere.
Amid the plumed and sceptred ones
Irradiatingly Jovian,
The mountain tower capped by the floating cloud;
A nursery screamer where dialectics ruled:

Mannerless, graceless, laughterless, unlike
Herself in all, yet with such power to strike,
That she the various features she could scan,
Dared not to sum, though seeing: and befooled
By power which beamed omnipotent, she bowed,
Subservient as roused echo round his guns.
Invulnerable Prince of Myrmidons,
He sparkled, by no sage Athene schooled.
Partly she read her riddle, stricken and pained;
But irony, her spirit's tongue, restrained.
The Critic, last of vital in the proud
Enslaved, when most detectively endowed,
Admired how irony's venom off him ran,
Like rain-drops down a statue cast in bronze:
Whereby of her keen rapier disarmed,
Again her chant of eulogy began,
Protesting, but with slavish senses charmed.

Her warrior, chief among the valorous great
In arms he was, dispelling shades of blame,
With radiance palpable in fruit and weight.
Heard she reproach, his victories blared response;
His victories bent the Critic to acclaim,
As with fresh blows upon a ringing sconce.

Or heard she from scarred ranks of jolly growls,
His veterans dwarf their reverence and, like
owls,
Laugh in the pitch of discord, to exalt
Their idol for some genial trick or fault,
She, too, became his marching veteran.
Again she took her breath from them who bore
His eagles through the tawny roar,
And murmured at a peaceful state,
That bred the title charlatan,
As missile from the mouth of hate,
For one the daemon fierily filled and hurled,
Cannon his name,
Shattering against a barrier world;
Her supreme player of man's primaeval game.

The daemon filled him, and he filled her sons;
Strung them to stature over human height,
As march the standards down the smoky fight;
Her cherubim, her towering mastodons!
Directed vault or breach, break through
Earth's toughest, seasons, elements, tame;
Dash at the bulk the sharpened few;
Count death the smallest of their debts:

Show that the will to do,
Is masculine and begets!

These princes unto him the mother owed;
These jewels of manhood that rich hand bestowed.
What wonder, though with wits awake
To read her riddle, for these her offspring's sake;—
And she, before high heaven adulteress,
The lost to honour, in his glory clothed,
Else naked, shamed in sight of men, self-loathed;—
That she should quench her thought, nor worship less
Than ere she bled on sands or snows and knew
The slave's alternative, to worship or to rue!

XI

Bright from the shell of that much limited man,
Her hero, like the falchion out of sheath,
Like soul that quits the tumbled body, soared:
And France, impulsive, nuptial with his plan,
Albeit the Critic fretting her, adored
Once more. Exultingly her heart went forth,
Submissive to his mind and mood,
The way of those pent-eyebrows North;
For now was he to win the wreath

Surpassing sunniest in camp or Court;
Next, as the blessed harvest after years of blight,
Sit, the Great Emperor, to be known the Good!

Now had the Seaman's volvent sprite,
Lean from the chase that barked his contraband,
A beggared applicant at every port,
To strew the profitless deeps and rot beneath,
Slung northward, for a hunted beast's retort
On sovereign power; there his final stand,
Among the perjured Scythian's shaggy horde,
The hydrocephalic aërolite
Had taken; flashing thence repellent teeth,
Though Europe's Master Europe's Rebel banned
To be earth's outcast, ocean's lord and sport.

Unmoved might seem the Master's taunted sword.
Northward his dusky legions nightly slipped,
As on the map of that all-provident head;
He luting Peace the while, like morning's cock
The quiet day to round the hours for bed;
No pastoral shepherd sweeter to his flock.
Then Europe first beheld her Titan stripped.
To what vast length of limb and mounds of thews,

How trained to scale the eminences, pluck
The hazards for new footing, how compel
Those timely incidents by men named luck,
Through forethought that defied the Fates to choose
Her grovelling admiration had not yet
Imagined of the great man-miracle;
And France recounted with her comic smile
Duplicities of Court and Cabinet,
The silky female of his male in guile,
Wherewith her two-faced Master could amuse
A dupe he charmed in sunny beams to bask,
Before his feint for camisado struck
The lightning moment of the cast-off mask.

Splendours of earth repeating heaven's at set
Of sun down mountain cloud in masses arched;
Since Asia upon Europe marched,
Unmatched the copious multitudes; unknown
To Gallia's over-runner, Rome's inveterate foe,
Such hosts; all one machine for overthrow,
Coruscant from the Master's hand, compact
As reasoned thoughts in the Master's head; were shown
Yon lightning moment when his acme might

Blazed o'er the stream that cuts the sandy tract
Borussian from Sarmatia's famished flat;
The century's flower; and off its pinnacled throne,
Rayed servitude on Europe's ball of sight.

XII

Behind the Northern curtain-folds he passed.
There heard hushed France her muffled heart beat
fast
Against the hollow ear-drum, where she sat
In expectation's darkness, until cracked
The straining curtain-seams: a scaly light
Was ghost above an army under shroud.
Imperious on Imperial Fact
Incestuously the incredible begat.
His veterans and auxiliaries,
The trained, the trustful, sanguine, proud,
Princely, scarce numerable to recite,—
Titanic of all Titan tragedies!—
That Northern curtain took them, as the seas
Gulp the great ships to give back shipmen white.

Alive in marble, she conceived in soul,
With barren eyes and mouth, the mother's loss;

The bolt from her abandoned heaven sped;
The snowy army rolling knoll on knoll
Beyond horizon, under no blest Cross:
By the vulture dotted and engarlanded.

Was it a necromancer lured
To weave his tense betraying spell?
A Titan whom our God endured
Till he of his foul hungers fell,
By all his craft and labour scourged?
A deluge Europe's liberated wave,
Pæan to sky, leapt over that vast grave.
Its shadow-points against her sacred land converged.
And him, her yoke-fellow, her black lord, her fate,
In doubt, in fevered hope, in chills of hate,
That tore her old credulity to strips,
Then pressed the auspicious relics on her lips,
His withered slave for foregone miracles urged.
And he, whom now his ominous halo's round,
A three parts blank decrescent sickle, crowned,
Prodigious in catastrophe, could wear
The realm of Darkness with its Prince's air;
Assume in mien the resolute pretence
To satiate an hungered confidence,

Proved criminal by the sceptic seen to cower
Beside the generous face of that frail flower.

XIII

Desire and terror then had each of each:
His crown and sword were staked on the magic stroke;
Her blood she gave as one who loved her leech;
And both did barter under union's cloak.
An union in hot fever and fierce need
Of either's aid, distrust in trust did breed.
Their traffic instincts hooded their live wits
To issues. Never human fortune throve
On such alliance. Viewed by fits,
From Vulcan's forge a hovering Jove
Evolved. The slave he dragged the Tyrant drove.
Her awe of him his dread of her invoked:
His nature with her shivering faith ran yoked.
What wisdom counselled, Policy declined;
All perils dared he save the step behind.
Ahead his grand initiative becked:
One spark of radiance blurred, his orb was wrecked.
Stripped to the despot upstart, for success
He raged to clothe a perilous nakedness.

He would not fall, while falling; would not be taught,
While learning; would not relax his grasp on aught
He held in hand, while losing it; pressed advance,
Pricked for her lees the veins of wasted France;
Who, had he stayed to husband her, had spun
The strength he taxed unripened for his throw,
In vengeful casts calamitous,
On fields where palsying Pyrrhic laurels grow,
The luminous the ruinous.
An incalescent scorpion,
And fierier for the mounded cirque
That narrowed at him thick and murk,
This gambler with his genius
Flung lives in angry volleys, bloody lightnings, flung
His fortunes to the hosts he stung,
With victories clipped his eagle's wings.
By the hands that built him up was he undone:
By the star aloft, which was his ram's-head will
Within; by the toppling throne the soldier won;
By the yeasty ferment of what once had been,
To cloud a rational mind for present things;
By his own force, the suicide in his mill.

Needs never God of Vengeance intervene
When giants their last lesson have to learn.
Fighting against an end he could discern,
The chivalry whereof he had none,
He called from his worn slave's abundant springs:
Not deigning spousally entreat
That ever blinded by his martial skill,
But harsh to have her worship counted out
In human coin, her vital rivers drained,
Her infant forests felled, commanded die
The decade thousand deaths for his Imperial seat,
Where throning he her faith in him maintained;
Bound Reason to believe delayed defeat
Was triumph; and what strength in her remained
To head against the ultimate foreseen rout,
Insensate taxed; of his impenitent will,
Servant and sycophant: without ally,
In Python's coils, the Master Craftsman still;
The smiter, panther springer, trapper sly,
The deadly wrestler at the crucial bout,
The penetrant, the tonant, tower of towers,
Striking from black disaster starry showers.
Her supreme player of man's primaeval game,
He won his harnessed victim's rapturous shout,

When every move was mortal to her frame,
Her prayer to life that stricken he might lie,
She to exchange his laurels for earth's flowers.

The innumerable whelmed him, and he fell:
A vessel in mid-ocean under storm.
Ere ceased the lullaby of his passing bell,
He sprang to sight, in human form
Revealed, from no celestial aids:
The shades enclosed him, and he fired the shades.

Cannon his name,
Cannon his voice, he came.
The fount of miracles from drought-dust arose,
Amazing even on his Imperial stage,
Where marvels lightened through the alternate hours
And winged o'er human earth's heroical shone.
Into the press of cumulative foes,
Across the friendly fields of smoke and rage,
A broken structure bore his furious powers;
The man no more, the Warrior Chief the same;
Match for all rivals; in himself but flame
Of an outworn lamp, to illumine nought anon.
Yet loud as when he first showed War's effete

Their Schoolman off his eagre mounted high,
And summoned to subject who dared compete,
The cannon in the name Napoleon
Discoursed of sulphur earth to curtained sky.
So through a tropic day a regnant sun,
Where armies of assailant vapours thronged,
His glory's trappings laid on them: comes night,
Enwraps him in a bosom quick of heat
From his anterior splendours, and shall seem
Day instant, Day's own lord in the furnace gleam,
The virulent quiver on ravished eyes prolonged,
When severed darkness, all flaminical bright,
Slips vivid eagles linked in rapid flight;
Which bring at whiles the lionly far roar,
As wrestled he with manacles and gags,
To speed across a cowering world once more,
Superb in ordered floods, his lordly flags.
His name on silence thundered, on the obscure
Lightened; it haunted morn and even-song:
Earth of her prodigy's extinction long,
With shudderings and with thrillings, hung unsure.

Snapped was the chord that made the resonant bow,
In France, abased and like a shrunken corse;

NAPOLÉON

Amid the weakest weak, the lowest low,
From the highest fallen, stagnant off her source;
Condemned to hear the nations' hostile mirth;
See curtained heavens, and smell a sulphurous earth;
Which told how evermore shall tyrant Force
Beget the greater for its overthrow.
The song of Liberty in her hearing spoke
A foreign tongue; Earth's fluttering little lyre
Unlike, but like the raven's ravening croak.
Not till her breath of being could aspire
Anew, this loved and scourged of Angels found
Our common brotherhood in sight and sound:
When mellow rang the name Napoleon,
And dim aloft her young Angelical waved.
Between ethereal and gross to choose,
She swung; her soul desired, her senses craved.
They pricked her dreams, while oft her skies were dun
Behind o'ershadowing foemen: on a tide
They drew the nature having need of pride
Among her fellows for its vital dues:
He seen like some rare treasure-galleon,
Hull down, with masts against the Western hues.

ODES

FRANCE

DECEMBER 1870 [1]

I

We look for her that sunlike stood
Upon the forehead of our day,
An orb of nations, radiating food
For body and for mind alway.
Where is the Shape of glad array;
The nervous hands, the front of steel,
The clarion tongue? Where is the bold proud face?
We see a vacant place;
We hear an iron heel.

II

O she that made the brave appeal
For manhood when our time was dark,
And from our fetters drove the spark
Which was as lightning to reveal
New seasons, with the swifter play
Of pulses, and benigner day;

[1] Written in December 1870, printed in the 'Fortnightly Review,' and published in the volume 'Ballads and Poems.'

She that divinely shook the dead
From living man; that stretched ahead
Her resolute forefinger straight,
And marched toward the gloomy gate
Of earth's Untried, gave note, and in
The good name of Humanity
Called forth the daring vision! she,
She likewise half corrupt of sin,
Angel and Wanton! can it be?
Her star has foundered in eclipse,
The shriek of madness on her lips;
Shreds of her, and no more, we see.
There is horrible convulsion, smothered din,
As of one that in a grave-cloth struggles to be free.

III

Look not for spreading boughs
On the riven forest tree.
Look down where deep in blood and mire
Black thunder plants his feet and ploughs
The soil for ruin: that is France:
Still thrilling like a lyre,
Amazed to shivering discord from a fall
Sudden as that the lurid hosts recall

Who met in heaven the irreparable mischance.
O that is France!
The brilliant eyes to kindle bliss,
The shrewd quick lips to laugh and kiss,
Breasts that a sighing world inspire,
And laughter-dimpled countenance
Where soul and senses caught desire!

IV

Ever invoking fire from heaven, the fire
Has grasped her, unconsumable, but framed
For all the ecstasies of suffering dire.
Mother of Pride, her sanctuary shamed:
Mother of Delicacy, and made a mark
For outrage: Mother of Luxury, stripped stark:
Mother of Heroes, bondsmen: thro' the rains,
Across her boundaries, lo the league-long chains!
Fond Mother of her martial youth; they pass,
Are spectres in her sight, are mown as grass!
Mother of Honour, and dishonoured: Mother
Of Glory, she condemned to crown with bays
Her victor, and be fountain of his praise.
Is there another curse? There is another:
Compassionate her madness: is she not

Mother of Reason? she that sees them mown
Like grass, her young ones! Yea, in the low groan
And under the fixed thunder of this hour
Which holds the animate world in one foul blot
Tranced circumambient while relentless Power
Beaks at her heart and claws her limbs down-thrown,
She, with the plungeing lightnings overshot,
With madness for an armour against pain,
With milkless breasts for little ones athirst,
And round her all her noblest dying in vain,
Mother of Reason is she, trebly cursed,
To feel, to see, to justify the blow;
Chamber to chamber of her sequent brain
Gives answer of the cause of her great woe,
Inexorably echoing thro' the vaults,
'Tis thus they reap in blood, in blood who sow:
'This is the sum of self-absolvëd faults.'
Doubt not that thro' her grief, with sight supreme,
Thro' her delirium and despair's last dream,
Thro' pride, thro' bright illusion and the brood
Bewildering of her various Motherhood,
The high strong light within her, tho' she bleeds,
Traces the letters of returned misdeeds.
She sees what seed long sown, ripened of late,

Bears this fierce crop; and she discerns her fate
From origin to agony, and on
As far as the wave washes long and wan
Off one disastrous impulse: for of waves
Our life is, and our deeds are pregnant graves
Blown rolling to the sunset from the dawn.

V

Ah, what a dawn of splendour, when her sowers
Went forth and bent the necks of populations
And of their terrors and humiliations
Wove her the starry wreath that earthward lowers
Now in the figure of a burning yoke!
Her legions traversed North and South and East,
Of triumph they enjoyed the glutton's feast:
They grafted the green sprig, they lopped the oak.
They caught by the beard the tempests, by the scalp
The icy precipices, and clove sheer through
The heart of horror of the pinnacled Alp,
Emerging not as men whom mortals knew.
They were the earthquake and the hurricane,
The lightnings and the locusts, plagues of blight,
Plagues of the revel: they were Deluge rain,
And dreaded Conflagration; lawless Might.

Death writes a reeling line along the snows,
Where under frozen mists they may be tracked,
Who men and elements provoked to foes,
And Gods: they were of god and beast compact:
Abhorred of all. Yet, how they sucked the teats
Of Carnage, thirsty issue of their dam,
Whose eagles, angrier than their oriflamme,
Flushed the vext earth with blood, green earth forgets.
The gay young generations mask her grief;
Where bled her children hangs the loaded sheaf.
Forgetful is green earth; the Gods alone
Remember everlastingly: they strike
Remorselessly, and ever like for like.
By their great memories the Gods are known.

VI

They are with her now, and in her ears, and known.
'Tis they that cast her to the dust for Strength,
Their slave, to feed on her fair body's length,
That once the sweetest and the proudest shone;
Scoring for hideous dismemberment
Her limbs, as were the anguish-taking breath
Gone out of her in the insufferable descent
From her high chieftainship; as were she death,

Who hears a voice of justice, feels the knife
Of torture, drinks all ignominy of life.
They are with her, and the painful Gods might weep,
If ever rain of tears came out of heaven
To flatter Weakness and bid conscience sleep,
Viewing the woe of this Immortal, driven
For the soul's life to drain the maddening cup
Of her own children's blood implacably:
Unsparing even as they to furrow up
The yellow land to likeness of a sea:
The bountiful fair land of vine and grain,
Of wit and grace and ardour, and strong roots,
Fruits perishable, imperishable fruits;
Furrowed to likeness of the dim grey main
Behind the black obliterating cyclone.

VII

Behold, the Gods are with her, and are known.
Whom they abandon misery persecutes
No more: them half-eyed apathy may loan
The happiness of pitiable brutes.
Whom the just Gods abandon have no light,
No ruthless light of introspective eyes
That in the midst of misery scrutinize

The heart and its iniquities outright.
They rest, they smile and rest; have earned perchance
Of ancient service quiet for a term;
Quiet of old men dropping to the worm;
And so goes out the soul. But not of France.
She cries for grief, and to the Gods she cries,
For fearfully their loosened hands chastize,
And icily they watch the rod's caress
Ravage her flesh from scourges merciless,
But she, inveterate of brain, discerns
That Pity has as little place as Joy
Among their roll of gifts; for Strength she yearns,
For Strength, her idol once, too long her toy.
Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born:
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws
Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.
Could France accept the fables of her priests,
Who blest her banners in this game of beasts,
And now bid hope that heaven will intercede

To violate its laws in her sore need,
She would find comfort in their opiates:
Mother of Reason! can she cheat the Fates?
Would she, the champion of the open mind,
The Omnipotent's prime gift—the gift of growth—
Consent even for a night-time to be blind,
And sink her soul on the delusive sloth,
For fruits ethereal and material, both,
In peril of her place among mankind?
The Mother of the many Laughters might
Call one poor shade of laughter in the light
Of her unwavering lamp to mark what things
The world puts faith in, careless of the truth:
What silly puppet-bodies danced on strings,
Attached by credence, we appear in sooth,
Demanding intercession, direct aid,
When the whole tragic tale hangs on a broken blade!

She swung the sword for centuries; in a day
It slipped her, like a stream cut off from source.
She struck a feeble hand, and tried to pray,
Clamoured of treachery, and had recourse
To drunken outcries in her dream that Force
Needed but hear her shouting to obey.

Was she not formed to conquer? The bright
plumes
Of crested vanity shed graceful nods:
Transcendent in her foundries, Arts and looms,
Had France to fear the vengeance of the Gods?
Her faith was on her battle-roll of names
Sheathed in the records of old war; with dance
And song she thrilled her warriors and her dames,
Embracing her Dishonour: gave him France
From head to foot, France present and to come,
So she might hear the trumpet and the drum—
Bellona and Bacchante! rushing forth
On yon stout marching Schoolmen of the North.

Inveterate of brain, well knows she why
Strength failed her, faithful to himself the first:
Her dream is done, and she can read the sky,
And she can take into her heart the worst
Calamity to drug the shameful thought
Of days that made her as the man she served
A name of terror, but a thing unnerved:
Buying the trickster, by the trickster bought,
She for dominion, he to patch a throne.

VIII

Henceforth of her the Gods are known,
Open to them her breast is laid.
Inveterate of brain, heart-valiant,
Never did fairer creature pant
Before the altar and the blade!

IX

Swift fall the blows, and men upbraid,
And friends give echo blunt and cold,
The echo of the forest to the axe.
Within her are the fires that wax
For resurrection from the mould.

X

She snatched at heaven's flame of old,
And kindled nations: she was weak:
Frail sister of her heroic prototype,
The Man; for sacrifice unripe,
She too must fill a Vulture's beak.
Deride the vanquished, and acclaim
The conqueror, who stains her fame,
Still the Gods love her, for that of high aim
Is this good France, the bleeding thing they stripe.

FRANCE

XI

She shall rise worthier of her prototype
Thro' her abasement deep; the pain that runs
From nerve to nerve some victory achieves.
They lie like circle-strewn soaked Autumn-leaves
Which stain the forest scarlet, her fair sons!
And of their death her life is: of their blood
From many streams now urging to a flood,
No more divided, France shall rise afresh.
Of them she learns the lesson of the flesh:—
The lesson writ in red since first Time ran,
A hunter hunting down the beast in man:
That till the chasing out of its last vice,
The flesh was fashioned but for sacrifice.

Immortal Mother of a mortal host!
Thou suffering of the wounds that will not slay,
Wounds that bring death but take not life away!—
Stand fast and hearken while thy victors boast:
Hearken, and loathe that music evermore.
Slip loose thy garments woven of pride and shame:
The torture lurks in them, with them the blame
Shall pass to leave thee purer than before.
Undo thy jewels, thinking whence they came,

For what, and of the abominable name
Of her who in imperial beauty wore.

O Mother of a fated fleeting host
Conceived in the past days of sin, and born
Heirs of disease and arrogance and scorn,
Surrender, yield the weight of thy great ghost,
Like wings on air, to what the heavens proclaim
With trumpets from the multitudinous mounds
Where peace has filled the hearing of thy sons:
Albeit a pang of dissolution rounds
Each new discernment of the undying ones,
Do thou stoop to these graves here scattered wide
Along thy fields, as sunless billows roll;
These ashes have the lesson for the soul.
'Die to thy Vanity, and strain thy Pride,
Strip off thy Luxury: that thou may'st live,
Die to thyself,' they say, 'as we have died
From dear existence and the foe forgive,
Nor pray for aught save in our little space
To warn good seed to greet the fair earth's face.'
O Mother! take their counsel, and so shall
The broader world breathe in on this thy home,
Light clear for thee the counter-changing dome,

FRANCE

Strength give thee, like an ocean's vast expanse
Off mountain cliffs, the generations all,
Not whirling in their narrow rings of foam,
But as a river forward. Soaring France!
Now is Humanity on trial in thee:
Now may'st thou gather humankind in fee:
Now prove that Reason is a quenchless scroll;
Make of calamity thine aureole,
And bleeding head us thro' the troubles of the sea.

ODES

ALSACE-LORRAINE

I

The sister Hours in circles linked,
Daughters of men, of men the mates,
Are gone on flow with the day that winked,
With the night that spanned at golden gates.
Mothers, they leave us, quickening seed;
They bear us grain or flower or weed,
As we have sown; is nought extinct
For them we fill to be our Fates.
Life of the breath is but the loan;
Passing death what we have sown.

Pearly are they till the pale inherited stain
Deepens in us, and the mirrors they form on their flow
Darken to feature and nature: a volumed chain,
Sequent of issue, in various eddies they show.
Theirs is the Book of the River of Life, to read
Leaf by leaf by reapers of long-sown seed:

There doth our shoot up to light from a spiriting sane
Stand as a tree whereon numberless clusters grow:
Legible there how the heart, with its one false move
Cast Eurydice pallor on all we love.

Our fervid heart has filled that Book in chief;
Our fitful heart a wild reflection views;
Our craving heart of passion suckling grief
Disowns the author's work it must peruse;
Inconscient in its leap to wreak the deed,
A round of harvests red from crimson seed,
It marks the current Hours show leaf by leaf,
And rails at Destiny; nor traces clues;
Though sometimes it may think what novel light
Will strike their faces when the mind shall write.

II

Succourful daughters of men are the rosed and starred
Revolving Twelves in their fluent germinal rings,
Despite the burden to chasten, abase, depose.
Fallen on France, as the sweep of scythe over sward,

They breathed in her ear their voice of the crystal springs,
That run from a twilight rise, from a twilight close,
Through alternate beams and glooms, rejoicingly young.
Only to Earth's best loved, at the breathless turns
Where Life in fold of the Shadow reclines unstrung,
And a ghostly lamp of their moment's union burns,
Will such pure notes from the fountain-head be sung.

Voice of Earth's very soul to the soul she would see renewed:
A song that sought no tears, that laid not a touch on the breast
Sobbing aswoon and, like last foxgloves' bells upon ferns
In sandy alleys of woodland silence, shedding to bare.
Daughters of Earth and men, they piped of her natural brood;
Her patient helpful four-feet; wings on the flit or in nest;
Paws at our old-world task to scoop a defensive lair;
Snouts at hunt through the scented grasses; enhavened scuts

Flashing escape under show of a laugh nigh the mossed burrow-mouth.

Sack-like droop bronze pears on the nailed branch-frontage of huts,

To greet those wedded toilers from acres where sweat is a shower.

Snake, cicada, lizard, on lavender slopes up South,

Pant for joy of a sunlight driving the fielders to bower.

Sharpened in silver by one chance breeze is the olive's grey;

A royal-mantle floats, a red fritillary hies;

The bee, for whom no flower of garden or wild has nay,

Noises, heard if but named, so hot is the trade he plies.

Processions beneath green arches of herbage, the long colonnades;

Laboured mounds that a foot or a wanton stick may subvert;

Homely are they for a lowly look on bedewed grass-blades,

On citied fir-droppings, on twisted wreaths of the worm in dirt.

Does nought so loosen our sight from the despot heart, to receive
Balm of a sound Earth's primary heart at its active beat:
The motive, yet servant of energy; simple as morn and eve;
Treasureless, fetterless; free of the bonds of a great conceit:
Unwounded even by cruel blows on a body that writhes;
Nor whimpering under misfortune; elusive of obstacles; prompt
To quit any threatened familiar domain seen doomed by the scythes;
Its day's hard business done, the score to the good accompt.
Creatures of forest and mead, Earth's essays in being, all kinds
Bound by the navel-knot to the Mother, never astray,
They in the ear upon ground will pour their intuitive minds,
Cut man's tangles for Earth's first broad rectilinear way:

Admonishing loftier reaches, the rich adventurous shoots,
Pushes of tentative curves, embryonic upwreathings in air;
Not always the sprouts of Earth's root-Laws preserving her brutes;
Oft but our primitive hungers licentious in fine and fair.

Yet the like aërial growths may chance be the delicate sprays,
Infant of Earth's most urgent in sap, her fierier zeal
For entry on Life's upper fields: and soul thus flourishing pays
The martyr's penance, mark for brutish in man to heel.

Her, from a nerveless well among stagnant pools of the dry,
Through her good aim at divine, shall commune with Earth remake;
Fraternal unto sororial, her, where abashed she may lie,
Divinest of man shall clasp; a world out of darkness awake,

As it were with the Resurrection's eyelids uplifted, to see
Honour in shame, in substance the spirit, in that dry fount
Jets of the songful ascending silvery-bright water-tree
Spout, with our Earth's unbaffled resurgent desire for the mount,
Though broken at intervals, clipped, and barren in seeming it be.

For this at our nature arises rejuvenescent from Earth,
However respersive the blow and nigh on infernal the fall,
The chastisement drawn down on us merited: are we of worth
Amid our satanic excrescences, this, for the less than a call,
Will Earth reprime, man cherish; the God who is in us and round,
Consenting, the God there seen. Impiety speaks despair;
Religion the virtue of serving as things of the furrowy ground,

Debtors for breath while breath with our fellows
in service we share.
Not such of the crowned discrowned
Can Earth or humanity spare;
Such not the God let die.

III

Eastward of Paris morn is high;
And darkness on that Eastward side
The heart of France beholds: a thorn
Is in her frame where shines the morn:
A rigid wave usurps her sky,
With eagle crest and eagle-eyed
To scan what wormy wrinkles hint
Her forces gathering: she the thrown
From station, lopped of an arm, astounded, lone,
Reading late History as a foul misprint:
Imperial, Angelical,
At strife commingled in her frame convulsed;
Shame of her broken sword, a ravening gall;
Pain of the limb where once her warm blood pulsed;
These tortures to distract her underneath
Her whelmed Aurora's shade. But in that space
When lay she dumb beside her trampled wreath,

Like an unburied body mid the tombs,
Feeling against her heart life's bitter probe
For life, she saw how children of her race,
The many sober sons and daughters, plied,
By cottage lamplight through the water-globe,
By simmering stew-pots, by the serious looms,
Afield, in factories, with the birds astir,
Their nimble feet and fingers; not denied
Refreshful chatter, laughter, galliard songs.
So like Earth's indestructible they were,
That wrestling with its anguish rose her pride,
To feel where in each breast the thought of her,
On whom the circle Hours laid leaded thongs,
Was constant; spoken sometimes in low tone
At lip or in a fluttered look,
A shortened breath: and they were her loved own;
Nor ever did they waste their strength with tears,
For pity of the weeper, nor rebuke,
Though mainly they were charged to pay her debt,
The Mother having conscience in arrears;
Ready to gush the flood of vain regret,
Else hearken to her weaponed children's moan
Of stifled rage invoking vengeance: hell's,
If heaven should fail the counter-wave that swells

In blood and brain for retribution swift.
Those helped not: wings to her soul were these who
yet
Could welcome day for labour, night for rest,
Enrich her treasury, built of cheerful thrift,
Of honest heart, beyond all miracles;
And likened to Earth's humblest were Earth's best.

IV

Brooding on her deep fall, the many strings
Which formed her nature set a thought on Kings,
As aids that might the low-laid cripple lift;
And one among them hummed devoutly leal,
While passed the sighing breeze along her breast.
Of Kings by the festive vanquishers rammed down
Her gorge since fell the Chief, she knew their crown;
Upon her through long seasons was its grasp,
For neither soul's nor body's weal;
As much bestows the robber wasp,
That in the hanging apple makes a meal,
And carves a face of abscess where was fruit
Ripe ruddy. They would blot
Her radiant leap above the slopes acute,
Of summit to celestial; impute

The wanton's aim to her divinest shot;
Bid her walk History backward over gaps;
Abhor the day of Phrygian caps;
Abjure her guerdon, execrate herself;
The Hapsburg, Hohenzollern, Guelph,
Admire repentant; reverently prostrate
Her person unto the belly-god; of whom
Is inward plenty and external bloom;
Enough of pomp and state
And carnival to quench
The breast's desires of an intemperate wench,
The head's ideas beyond legitimate.

She flung them: she was France: nor with far frown
Her lover from the embrace of her refrained:
But in her voice an interwoven wire,
The exultation of her gross renown,
Struck deafness at her heavens, and they waned
Over a look ill-gifted to aspire.

Wherefore, as an abandonment, irate,
The intemperate summoned up her trumpet days,
Her treasure-galleon's wondrous freight.
The cannon-name she sang and shrieked; transferred

Her soul's allegiance; o'er the Tyrant slurred,
Tranced with the zeal of her first fawning gaze,
To clasp his trophy flags and hail him Saint.

V

She hailed him Saint:
And her Jeanne unsainted, foully sung!
The virgin who conceived a France when funeral glooms
Across a land aquake with sharp disseverance hung:
Conceived, and under stress of battle brought her forth;
Crowned her in purification of feud and foeman's taint;
Taught her to feel her blood her being, know her worth,
Have joy of unity: the Jeanne bescreeched, bescoffed,
Who flamed to ashes, flew up wreaths of faggot fumes;
Through centuries a star in vapour-folds aloft.

For her people to hail her Saint,
Were no lifting of her, Earth's gem,
Earth's chosen, Earth's throb on divine:

In the ranks of the starred she is one,
While man has thought on our line:
No lifting of her, but for them,
Breath of the mountain, beam of the sun
Through mist, out of swamp-fires' lures release,
Youth on the forehead, the rough right way
Seen to be footed: for them the heart's peace,
By the mind's war won for a permanent miracle day.

Her arms below her sword-hilt crossed,
The heart of that high-hallowed Jeanne
Into the furnace-pit she tossed
Before her body knew the flame,
And sucked its essence: warmth for righteous work,
An undivided power to speed her aim.
She had no self but France: the sainted man
No France but self. Him warrior and clerk,
Free of his iron clutch; and him her young,
In whirled imagination mastodonized;
And him her penmen, him her poets; all
For the visioned treasure-galleon astrain;
Sent zenithward on bass and treble tongue,

Till solely through his glory France was prized.
She who had her Jeanne;
The child of her industrious;
Earth's truest, earth's pure fount from the main;
And she who had her one day's mate,
In the soul's view illustrious
Past blazonry, her Immaculate;
Those hours of slavish Empire would recall;
Thrill to the rattling anchor-chain
She heard upon a day in 'I who can';
Start to the softened, tremulous bugle-blare
Of that Caesarean Italian
Across the storied fields of trampled grain,
As to a Vercingetorix of old Gaul
Blowing the rally against a Caesar's reign.
Her soul's protesting sobs she drowned to swear
Fidelity unto the sainted man,
Whose nimbus was her crown; and be again
The foreigner in Europe, known of none,
None knowing; sight to dazzle, voice to stun.
Rearward she stepped, with thirst for Europe's van;
The dream she nursed a snare,
The flag she bore a pall.

VI

In Nature is no rearward step allowed.
Hard on the rock Reality do we dash
To be shattered, if the material dream propels.
The worship to departed splendour vowed
Conjured a simulacrum, wove her lash,
For the slow measure timed her peal of bells.

Thereof was the cannon-name a mockery round
her hills;
For the will of wills,
Its flaccid ape,
Weak as the final echo off a giant's bawl:
Napoleon for disdain,
His banner steeped in crape.
Thereof the barrier of Alsace-Lorraine;
The frozen billow crested to its fall;
Dismemberment; disfigurement;
Her history blotted; her proud mantle rent;
And ever that one word to reperuse,
With eyes behind a veil of fiery dews;
Knelling the spot where Gallic soil defiled,
Showed her sons' valour as a frenzied child

In arms of the mailed man.
Word that her mind must bear, her heart put under ban,
Lest burst it: unto her eyes a ghost,
Incredible though manifest: a scene
Stamped with her new Saint's name: and all his host
A wattled flock the foeman's dogs between!

VII

Mark where a credible ghost pulls bridle to view that bare
Corpse of a field still reddening cloud, and alive in its throes
Beneath her Purgatorial Saint's evocative stare:
Brand on his name, the gulf of his glory, his Legend's close.
A lustreless Phosphor heading for daybeam Night's dead-born,
His underworld eyeballs grip the cast of the land for a fray
Expugnant; swift up the heights, with the Victor's instinctive scorn
Of the trapped below, he rides; he beholds, and a two-fold grey,

Even as the misty sun growing moon that a frost enrings,
Is shroud on the shrouded; he knows him there in the helmeted ranks.
The golden eagles flap lame wings,
The black double-headed are round their flanks.
He is there in midst of the pupils he harried to brain-awake, trod into union; lo,
These are his Epic's tutored Dardans, yon that Rhapsode's Achaeans to know.
Nor is aught of an equipollent conflict seen, nor the weaker's flashed device;
Headless is offered a breast to beaks deliberate, formal, assured, precise.
Ruled by the mathematician's hand, they solve their problem, as on a slate.
This is the ground foremarked, and the day; their leader modestly hazarded date.
His helmeted ranks might be draggers of pools or reapers of plains for the warrior's guile
Displayed; they haul, they rend, as in some orderly office mercantile.
And a timed artillery speaks full-mouthed on a stuttering feeble reduced to nought.

Can it be France, an army of France, tricked, netted,
convulsive, all writhen caught?

Arterial blood of an army's heart outpoured, the Grey
Observer sees:
A forest of France in thunder comes, like a landslide
hurled off her Pyrenees.
Torrent and forest ramp, roll, sling on for a charge
against iron, reason, Fate;
It is gapped through the mass midway, bare ribs and
dust ere the helmeted feel its weight.
So the blue billow white-plumed is plunged upon
shingle to screaming withdrawal, but snatched,
Waved is the laurel eternal yielded by Death o'er the
waste of brave men outmatched.
The France of the fury was there, the thing he had
wielded, whose honour was dearer than life;
The Prussia despised, the harried, the trodden, was
here; his pupil, the scholar in strife.

He haled to heel, in a spasm of will,
From sleep or debate, a mannikin squire
With head of a merlin hawk and quill
Acrow on an ear. At him rained fire

From a blast of eyeballs hotter than speech,
To say what a deadly poison stuffed
The France here laid in her bloody ditch,
Through the Legend passing human puffed.

Credible ghost of the field which from him descends,
Each dark anniversary day will its father return,
Haling his shadow to spy where the Legend ends,
That penman trumpeter's part in the wreck discern.

There, with the cup it presents at her lips, she stands,
France, with her future staked on the word it may pledge.
The vengeance urged of desire a reserve countermands;
The patience clasped totters hard on the precipice edge.

Lopped of an arm, mother love for her own springs quick,
To curdle the milk in her breasts for the young they feed,
At thought of her single hand, and the lost so nigh.
Mother love for her own, who raised her when she lay sick

Nigh death, and would in like fountains fruitlessly
bleed,
Withholds the fling of her heart on the further die.

Of love is wisdom. Is it great love, then wise
Will our wild heart be, though whipped unto madness
more
By its mentor's counselling voice than thoughtfully
reined.
Desire of the wave for the shore,
Passion for one last agony under skies,
To make her heavens remorseful, she restrained.

VIII

On her lost arm love bade her look;
On her one hand to meditate;
The tumult of her blood abate;
Disaster face, derision brook:
Forbade the page of her Historic Muse,
Until her demon his last hold forsook,
And smoothly, with no countenance of hate,
Her conqueror she could scan to measure. Thence
The strange new Winter stream of ruling sense,
Cold, comfortless, but braced to disabuse,

Ran through the mind of this most lowly laid;
From the top billow of victorious War,
Down in the flagless troughs at ebb and flow;
A wreck; her past, her future, both in shade.

She read the things that are;
Reality unaccepted read
For sign of the distraught, and took her blow
To brain; herself read through;
Wherefore her predatory Glory paid
Napoleon ransom knew.
Her nature's many strings hot gusts did jar
Against the note of reason uttered low,
Ere passionate with duty she might wed,
Compel the bride's embrace of her stern groom.
Joined at an altar liker to the tomb,
Nest of the Furies their first nuptial bed,
They not the less were mated and proclaimed
The rational their issue. Then she rose.

See how the rush of southern Springtide glows
Oceanic in the chariot-wheel's ascent,
Illuminated with one breath. The maimed,
Torn, tortured, winter-visaged, suddenly

Had stature; to the world's wonderment,
Fair features, grace of mien, nor least
The comic dimples round her April mouth,
Sprung of her intimate humanity.
She stood before mankind the very South
Rapt out of frost to flowery drapery;
Unshadowed save when somewhiles she looked East.

IX

Let but the rational prevail,
Our footing is on ground though all else fail:
Our kiss of Earth is then a plight
To walk within her Laws and have her light.
Choice of the life or death lies in ourselves;
There is no fate but when unreason lours.
This Land the cheerful toiler delves,
The thinker brightens with fine wit,
The lovelier grace as lyric flowers,
Those rosed and starred revolving Twelves
Shall nurse for effort infinite
While leashed to brain the heart of France the Fair
Beats tempered music and its lead subserves.
Washed from her eyes the Napoleonic glare,
Divinely raised by that in her divine,

Not the clear sight of Earth's blunt actual swerves
When her lost look, as on a wave of wine,
Rolls Eastward, and the mother-flag descries
Caress with folds and curves
The fortress over Rhine,
Beneath the one tall spire.
Despite her brooding thought, her nightlong sighs,
Her anguish in desire,
She sees, above the brutish paw
Alert on her still quivering limb—
As little in past time she saw,
Nor when dispieced as prey,
As victrix when abhorred—
A Grand Germania, stout on soil;
Audacious up the ethereal dim;
The forest's Infant; the strong hand for toil;
The patient brain in twilights when astray;
Shrewdest of heads to foil and counterfoil;
The sceptic and devout; the potent sword;
With will and armed to help in hewing way
For Europe's march; and of the most golden chord
Of the Heliconian lyre
Excellent mistress. Yea, she sees, and can admire;
Still seeing in what walks the Gallia leads;

And with what shield upon Alsace-Lorraine
Her wary sister's doubtful look misreads
A mother's throbs for her lost: so loved: so near:
Magnetic. Hard the course for her to steer,
The leap against the sharpened spikes restrain.
For the belted Overshadower hard the course,
On whom devolves the spirit's touchstone, Force:
Which is the strenuous arm, to strike inclined,
That too much adamantine makes the mind;
Forgets it coin of Nature's rich Exchange;
Contracts horizons within present sight:
Amalekite to-day, across its range
Indisputable; to-morrow Simeonite.

X

The mother who gave birth to Jeanne;
Who to her young Angelical sprang;
Who lay with Earth and heard the notes she sang,
And heard her truest sing them; she may reach
Heights yet unknown of nations; haply teach
A thirsting world to learn 'tis 'she who can.'

She that in History's Heliaea pleads
The nation flowering conscience o'er the beast;

With heart expurged of rancour, tame of greeds;
With the winged mind from fang and claw released;—
Will such a land be seen? It will be seen;—
Shall stand adjudged our foremost and Earth's Queen.
Acknowledgement that she of God proceeds
The invisible makes visible, as his priest,
To her is yielded by a world reclaimed.
And stands she mutilated, fancy-shamed,
Yet strong in arms, yet strong in self-control,
Known valiant, her maternal throbs repressed,
Discarding vengeance, Giant with a soul;—
My faith in her when she lay low
Was fountain; now as wave at flow
Beneath the lights, my faith in God is best;—
On France has come the test
Of what she holds within
Responsive to Life's deeper springs.
She above the nations blest
In fruitful and in liveliest,
In all that servant earth to heavenly bidding brings,
The devotee of Glory, she may win
Glory despoiling none, enrich her kind,
Illume her land, and take the royal seat
Unto the strong self-conqueror assigned.

But ah, when speaks a loaded breath the double
name,
Humanity's old Foeman winks agrin.
Her constant Angel eyes her heart's quick beat,
The thrill of shadow coursing through her frame,
Like wind among the ranks of amber wheat.
Our Europe, vowed to unity or torn,
Observes her face, as shepherds note the morn,
And in a ruddy beacon mark an end
That for the flock in their grave hearing rings.
Specked overhead the imminent vulture wings
At poise, one fatal movement indiscreet,
Sprung from the Ætna passions' mad revolts,
Draws down; the midnight hovers to descend;
And dire as Indian noons of ulcer heat
Anticipating tempest and the bolts,
Hangs curtained terrors round our next day's door,
Death's emblems for the breast of Europe flings;
The breast that waits a spark to fire her store.
Shall, then, the great vitality, France,
Signal the backward step once more;
Again a Goddess Fortune trace
Amid the Deities, and pledge to chance
One whom we never could replace?

Now may she tune her nature's many strings
To noble harmony, be seen, be known.

It was the foreign France, the unruly, feared;
Little for all her witcheries endeared;
Theatrical of arrogance, a sprite
With gaseous vapours overblown,
In her conceit of power ensphered,
Foredoomed to violate and atone;
Her the grim conqueror's iron might
Avengeing clutched, distrusting rent;
Not that sharp intellect with fire endowed
To cleave our webs, run lightnings through our cloud;
Not virtual France, the France benevolent,
The chivalrous, the many-stringed, sublime
At intervals, and oft in sweetest chime;
Though perilously instrument,
A breast for any having godlike gleam.
This France could no antagonist disesteem,
To spurn at heel and confiscate her brood.
Albeit a waverer between heart and mind,
And laurels won from sky or plucked from blood,
Which wither all the wreath when intertwined,
This cherishable France she may redeem.

Beloved of Earth, her heart should feel at length
How much unto Earth's offspring it doth owe.
Obstructions are for levelling, have we strength;
'Tis poverty of soul conceives a foe.
Rejected be the wrath that keeps unhealed
Her panting wound; to higher Courts appealed
The wrongs discerned of higher: Europe waits:
She chooses God or gambles with the Fates.
Shines the new Helen in Alsace-Lorraine,
A darker river severs Rhine and Rhone,
Is heard a deadlier Epic of the twain;
We see a Paris burn
Or France Napoleon.

For yet he breathes whom less her heart forswears
While trembles its desire to thwart her mind:
The Tyrant lives in Victory's return.
What figure with recurrent footstep fares
Around those memoried tracks of scarlet mud,
To sow her future from an ashen urn
By lantern-light, as dragons' teeth are sown?
Of bleeding pride the piercing seër is blind.
But, cleared her eyes of that ensanguined scud
Distorting her true features, to be shown

Benignly luminous, one who bears
Humanity at breast, and she might learn
How surely the excelling generous find
Renouncement is possession. Sure
As light enkindles light when heavenly earthly mates,
The flame of pure immits the flame of pure,
Magnanimous magnanimous creates.
So to majestic beauty stricken rears
Hard-visaged rock against the risen glow;
And men are in the secret with the spheres,
Whose glory is celestially to bestow.

Now nation looks to nation, that may live
Their common nurseling, like the torrent's flower,
Shaken by foul Destruction's fast-piled heap.
On France is laid the proud initiative
Of sacrifice in one self-mastering hour,
Whereby more than her lost one will she reap;
Perchance the very lost regain,
To count it less than her superb reward.
Our Europe, where is debtor each to each,
Pass measure of excess, and war is Cain,
Fraternal from the Seaman's beach,
From answering Rhine in grand accord,

ALSACE-LORRAINE

From Neva beneath Northern cloud,
And from our Transatlantic Europe loud,
Will hail the rare example for their theme;
Give response, as rich foliage to the breeze;
In their entrusted nurseling know them one:
Like a brave vessel under press of steam,
Abreast the winds and tides, on angry seas,
Plucked by the heavens forlorn of present sun,
Will drive through darkness, and, with faith supreme,
Have sight of haven and the crowded quays.

A READING OF LIFE

THE VITAL CHOICE

I

Or shall we run with Artemis
Or yield the breast to Aphrodite?
Both are mighty;
Both give bliss;
Each can torture if divided;
Each claims worship undivided,
In her wake would have us wallow.

II

Youth must offer on bent knees
Homage unto one or other;
Earth, the mother,
This decrees;
And unto the pallid Scyther
Either points us shun we either
Shun or too devoutly follow.

WITH THE HUNTRESS

Through the water-eye of night,
Midway between eve and dawn,
See the chase, the rout, the flight
In deep forest; oread, faun,
Goat-foot, antlers laid on neck;
Ravenous all the line for speed.
See yon wavy sparkle beck
Sign of the Virgin Lady's lead.
Down her course a serpent star
Coils and shatters at her heels;
Peals the horn exulting, peals
Plaintive, is it near or far.
Huntress, arrowy to pursue,
In and out of woody glen,
Under cliffs that tear the blue,
Over torrent, over fen,
She and forest, where she skims
Feathery, darken and relume:

Those are her white-lightning limbs
Cleaving loads of leafy gloom.
Mountains hear her and call back,
Shrewd with night: a frosty wail
Distant: her the emerald vale
Folds, and wonders in her track.
Now her retinue is lean,
Many rearward; streams the chase
Eager forth of covert; seen
One hot tide the rapturous race.
Quiver-charged and crescent-crowned,
Up on a flash the lighted mound
Leaps she, bow to shoulder, shaft
Strung to barb with archer's craft,
Legs like plaited lyre-chords, feet
Songs to see, past pitch of sweet.
Fearful swiftness they outrun,
Shaggy wildness, grey or dun,
Challenge, charge of tusks elude:
Theirs the dance to tame the rude;
Beast, and beast in manhood tame,
Follow we their silver flame.
Pride of flesh from bondage free,
Reaping vigour of its waste,

Marks her servitors, and she
Sanctifies the unembraced.
Nought of perilous she recks;
Valour clothes her open breast;
Sweet beyond the thrill of sex;
Hallowed by the sex confessed.
Huntress arrowy to pursue,
Colder she than sunless dew,
She, that breath of upper air;
Ay, but never lyrist sang,
Draught of Bacchus never sprang
Blood the bliss of Gods to share,
High o'er sweep of eagle wings,
Like the run with her, when rings
Clear her rally, and her dart,
In the forest's cavern heart,
Tells of her victorious aim.
Then is pause and chatter, cheer,
Laughter at some satyr lame,
Looks upon the fallen deer,
Measuring his noble crest;
Here a favourite in her train,
Foremost mid her nymphs, caressed;
All applauded. Shall she reign

WITH THE HUNTRESS

Worshipped? O to be with her there!
She, that breath of nimble air,
Lifts the breast to giant power.
Maid and man, and man and maid,
Who each other would devour
Elsewhere, by the chase betrayed,
There are comrades, led by her,
Maid-preserver, man-maker.

WITH THE PERSUADER

Who murmurs, hither, hither: who
Where nought is audible so fills the ear?
Where nought is visible can make appear
A veil with eyes that waver through,
Like twilight's pledge of blessed night to come,
Or day most golden? All unseen and dumb,
She breathes, she moves, inviting flees,
Is lost, and leaves the thrilled desire
To clasp and strike a slackened lyre,
Till over smiles of hyacinth seas,
Flame in a crystal vessel sails
Beneath a dome of jewelled spray,
For land that drops the rosy day
On nights of throbbing nightingales.

Landward did the wonder flit,
Or heart's desire of her, all earth in it.
We saw the heavens fling down their rose;
On rapturous waves we saw her glide;

The pearly sea-shell half enclose;
The shoal of sea-nymphs flush the tide;
And we, afire to kiss her feet, no more
Behold than tracks along a startled shore,
With brightened edges of dark leaves that feign
An ambush hoped, as heartless night remain.

More closely, warmly: hither, hither! she,
The very she called forth by ripened blood
For its next breath of being, murmurs; she,
Allurement; she, fulfilment; she,
The stream within us urged to flood;
Man's cry, earth's answer, heaven's consent; O she,
Maid, woman and divinity;
Our over-earthly, inner-earthly mate
Unmated; she, our hunger and our fruit
Untasted; she our written fate
Unread; Life's flowering, Life's root:
Unread, divined; unseen, beheld;
The evanescent, ever-present she,
Great Nature's stern necessity
In radiance clothed, to softness quelled;
With a sword's edge of sweetness keen to take
Our breath for bliss, our hearts for fulness break.

The murmur hushes down, the veil is rent.
Man's cry, earth's answer, heaven's consent,
Her form is given to pardoned sight,
And lets our mortal eyes receive
The sovereign loveliness of celestial white;
Adored by them who solitarily pace,
In dusk of the underworld's perpetual eve,
The paths among the meadow asphodel,
Remembering. Never there her face
Is planetary; reddens to shore sea-shell
Around such whiteness the enamoured air
Of noon that clothes her, never there.
Daughter of light, the joyful light,
She stands unveiled to nuptial sight,
Sweet in her disregard of aid
Divine to conquer or persuade.
A fountain jets from moss; a flower
Bends gently where her sunset tresses shower.
By guerdon of her brilliance may be seen
With eyelids unabashed the passion's Queen.

Shorn of attendant Graces she can use
Her natural snares to make her will supreme.
A simple nymph it is, inclined to muse

WITH THE PERSUADER

Before the leader foot shall dip in stream:
One arm at curve along a rounded thigh;
Her firm new breasts each pointing its own way;
A knee half bent to shade its fellow shy,
Where innocence, not nature, signals nay.
The bud of fresh virginity awaits
The wooer, and all roseate will she burst:
She touches on the hour of happy mates;
Still is she unaware she wakens thirst.

And while commanding blissful sight believe
It holds her as a body strained to breast,
Down on the underworld's perpetual eve
She plunges the possessor dispossessed;
And bids believe that image, heaving warm,
Is lost to float like torch-smoke after flame;
The phantom any breeze blows out of form;
A thirst's delusion, a defeated aim.

The rapture shed the torture weaves;
The direst blow on human heart she deals:
The pain to know the seen deceives;
Nought true but what insufferably feels.
And stabs of her delicious note,

That is as heavenly light to hearing, heard
Through shelter leaves, the laughter from her throat,
We answer as the midnight's morning's bird.

She laughs, she wakens gleeful cries;
In her delicious laughter part revealed;
Yet mother is she more of moans and sighs,
For longings unappeased and wounds unhealed.
Yet would she bless, it is her task to bless:
Yon folded couples, passing under shade,
Are her rich harvest; bidden caress, caress,
Consume the fruit in bloom; not disobeyed.
We dolorous complainers had a dream,
Wrought on the vacant air from inner fire,
We saw stand bare of her celestial beam
The glorious Goddess, and we dared desire.

Thereat are shown reproachful eyes, and lips
Of upward curl to meanings half obscure;
And glancing where a wood-nymph lightly skips
She nods: at once that creature wears her lure.
Blush of our being between birth and death:
Sob of our ripened blood for its next breath:

Her wily semblance nought of her denies;
Seems it the Goddess runs, the Goddess hies,
The generous Goddess yields. And she can arm
Her dwarfed and twisted with her secret charm;
Benevolent as Earth to feed her own.
Fully shall they be fed, if they beseech.
But scorn she has for them that walk alone;
Blanched men, starved women, whom no arts can
pleach.
The men as chief of criminals she disdains,
And holds the reason in perceptive thought.
More pitiable, like rivers lacking rains,
Kissing cold stones, the women shrink for drought.
Those faceless discords, out of nature strayed,
Rank of the putrefaction ere decayed,
In impious singles bear the thorny wreaths:
Their lives are where harmonious Pleasure breathes
For couples crowned with flowers that burn in
dew.
Comes there a tremor of night's forest horn
Across her garden from the insaner crew,
She darkens to malignity of scorn.
A shiver courses through her garden-grounds:
Grunt of the tusky boar, the baying hounds,

The hunter's shouts, are heard afar, and bring
Dead on her heart her crimsoned flower of Spring.
These, the irreverent of Life's design,
Division between natural and divine
Would cast; these vaunting barrenness for best,
In veins of gathered strength Life's tide arrest;
And these because the roses flood their cheeks,
Vow them in nature wise as when Love speaks.
With them is war; and well the Goddess knows
What undermines the race who mount the rose;
How the ripe moment, lodged in slumberous hours,
Enkindled by persuasion overpowers:
Why weak as are her frailer trailing weeds,
The strong when Beauty gleams o'er Nature's needs,
And timely guile unguarded finds them lie.
They who her sway withstand a sea defy,
At every point of juncture must be proof;
Nor look for mercy from the incessant surge
Her forces mixed of craft and passion urge
For the one whelming wave to spring aloof.
She, tenderness, is pitiless to them
Resisting in her godhead nature's truth.
No flower their face shall be, but writhen stem;

Their youth a frost, their age the dirge for youth.
These miserably disinclined,
The lamentably unembraced,
Insult the Pleasures Earth designed
To people and beflower the waste.
Wherefore the Pleasures pass them by:
For death they live, in life they die.

Her head the Goddess from them turns,
As from grey mounds of ashes in bronze urns.
She views her quivering couples unconsoled,
And of her beauty mirror they become,
Like orchard blossoms, apple, pear and plum,
Free of the cloud, beneath the flood of gold.
Crowned with wreaths that burn in dew,
Her couples whirl, sun-satiated,
Athirst for shade; they sigh, they wed,
They play the music made of two:
Oldest of earth, earth's youngest till earth's end:
Cunninger than the numbered strings,
For melodies, for harmonies,
For mastered discords, and the things
Not vocable, whose mysteries
Are inmost Love's, Life's reach of Life extend.

Is it an anguish overflowing shame
And the tongue's pudency confides to her,
With eyes of embers, breath of incense myrrh,
The woman's marrow in some dear youth's name,
Then is the Goddess tenderness
Maternal, and she has a sister's tones
Benign to soothe intemperate distress,
Divide despair from hope, and sighs from moans.
Her gentleness imparts exhaling ease
To those of her milk-bearer votaries
As warm of bosom-earth as she; of the source
Direct; erratic but in heart's excess;
Being mortal and ill-matched for Love's great force;
Like green leaves caught with flames by his impress.
And pray they under skies less overcast,
That swiftly may her star of eve descend,
Her lustrous morning star fly not too fast,
To lengthen blissful night will she befriend.

Unfailing her reply to woman's voice
In supplication instant. Is it man's,
She hears, approves his words, her garden scans,
And him: the flowers are various, he has choice.

Perchance his wound is deep; she listens long;
Enjoys what music fills the plaintive song;
And marks how he, who would be hawk at poise
Above the bird, his plaintive song enjoys.

She reads him when his humbled manhood weeps
To her invoked: distraction is implored.
A smile, and he is up on godlike leaps
Above, with his bright Goddess owned the adored.
His tales of her declare she condescends;
Can share his fires, not always goads and rends:
Moreover, quits a throne, and must enclose
A queenlier gem than woman's wayside rose.
She bends, he quickens; she breathes low, he springs
Enraptured; low she laughs, his woes disperse;
Aloud she laughs and sweeps his varied strings.
'Tis taught him how for touch of mournful verse
Rarely the music made of two ascends,
And Beauty's Queen some other way is won.
Or it may solve the riddle, that she lends
Herself to all, and yields herself to none,
Save heavenliest: though claims by men are raised
In hot assurance under shade of doubt:

And numerous are the images bepraised
As Beauty's Queen, should passion head the rout.

Be sure the ruddy hue is Love's: to woo
Love's Fountain we must mount the ruddy hue.
That is her garden's precept, seen where shines
Her blood-flower, and its unsought neighbour pines.
Daughter of light, the joyful light,
She bids her couples face full East,
Reflecting radiance, even when from her feast
Their outstretched arms brown deserts disunite,
The lion-haunted thickets hold apart.
In love the ruddy hue declares great heart;
High confidence in her whose aid is lent
To lovers lifting the tuned instrument,
Not one of rippled strings and funeral tone.
And doth the man pursue a tightened zone,
Then be it as the Laurel God he runs,
Confirmed to win, with countenance the Sun's.

Should pity bless the tremulous voice of woe
He lifts for pity, limp his offspring show.
For him requiring woman's arts to please
Infantile tastes with babe reluctances,

No race of giants! In the woman's veins
Persuasion ripely runs, through hers the pains.
Her choice of him, should kind occasion nod,
Aspiring blends the Titan with the God;
Yet unto dwarf and mortal, she, submiss
In her high Lady's mandate, yields the kiss;
And is it needed that Love's daintier brute
Be snared as hunter, she will tempt pursuit.
She is great Nature's ever intimate
In breast, and doth as ready handmaid wait,
Until perverted by her senseless male,
She plays the winding snake, the shrinking snail,
The flying deer, all tricks of evil fame,
Elusive to allure, since he grew tame.

Hence has the Goddess, Nature's earliest Power,
And greatest and most present, with her dower
Of the transcendent beauty, gained repute
For meditated guile. She laughs to hear
A charge her garden's labyrinths scarce confute,
Her garden's histories tell of to all near.
Let it be said. But less upon her guile
Doth she rely for her immortal smile.
Still let the rumour spread, and terror screens

To push her conquests by the simplest means.
While man abjures not lustihead, nor swerves
From earth's good labours, Beauty's Queen he serves.

Her spacious garden and her garden's grant
She offers in reward for handsome cheer:
Choice of the nymphs whose looks will slant
The secret down a dewy leer
Of corner eyelids into haze:
Many a fair Aphrosyne
Like flower-bell to honey-bee:
And here they flicker round the maze
Bewildering him in heart and head:
And here they wear the close demure,
With subtle peeps to reassure:
Others parade where love has bled,
And of its crimson weave their mesh:
Others to snap of fingers leap,
As bearing breast with love asleep.
These are her laughters in the flesh.
Or would she fit a warrior mood,
She lights her seeming unsubdued,
And indicates the fortress-key.
Or is it heart for heart that craves,

She flecks along a run of waves
The one to promise deeper sea.

Bands of her limpid primitives,
Or patterned in the curious braid,
Are the blest man's; and whatsoe'er he gives,
For what he gives is he repaid.
Good is it if by him 'tis held
He wins the fairest ever welled
From Nature's founts: she whispers it: Even I
Not fairer! and forbids him to deny,
Else little is he lover. Those he clasps,
Intent as tempest, worshipful as prayer,—
And be they doves or be they asps,—
Must seem to him the sovereignly fair;
Else counts he soon among life's wholly tamed.
Him whom from utter savage she reclaimed,
Half savage must he stay, would he be crowned
The lover. Else, past ripeness, deathward bound,
He reasons; and the totterer Earth detests,
Love shuns, grim Logic screws in grasp, is he.
Doth man divide divine Necessity
From Joy, between the Queen of Beauty's breasts
A sword is driven; for those most glorious twain

Present her; armed to bless and to constrain.
Of this he perishes; not she, she throned
On rocks that spout their springs to the sacred mounts.
A loftier Reason out of deeper founts
Earth's chosen Goddess bears: by none disowned
While red blood runs to swell the pulse, she boasts,
And Beauty, like her star, descends the sky;
Earth's answer, heaven's consent unto man's cry,
Uplifted by the innumerable hosts.

Quickened of Nature's eye and ear,
When the wild sap at high tide smites
Within us; or benignly clear
To vision; or as the iris lights
On fluctuant waters; she is ours
Till set of man: the dreamed, the seen;
Flushing the world with odorous flowers:
A soft compulsion on terrene
By heavenly: and the world is hers
While hunger after Beauty spurs.

So is it sung in any space
She fills, with laugh at shallow laws
Forbidding love's devised embrace,
The music Beauty from it draws.

THE TEST OF MANHOOD

Like a flood river whirled at rocky banks,
An army issues out of wilderness,
With battle plucking round its ragged flanks;
Obstruction in the van; insane excess
Oft at the heart; yet hard the onward stress
Unto more spacious, where move ordered ranks,
And rise hushed temples built of shapely stone,
The work of hands not pledged to grind or slay.
They gave our earth a dress of flesh on bone;
A tongue to speak with answering heaven gave they.
Then was the gracious birth of man's new day;
Divided from the haunted night it shone.

That quiet dawn was Reverence; whereof sprang
Ethereal Beauty in full morningtide.
Another sun had risen to clasp his bride:
It was another earth unto him sang.

Came Reverence from the Huntress on her heights?
From the Persuader came it, in those vales
Whereunto she melodiously invites,
Her troops of eager servitors regales?
Not far those two great Powers of Nature speed
Disciple steps on earth when sole they lead;
Nor either points for us the way of flame.
From him predestined mightier it came;
His task to hold them both in breast, and yield
Their dues to each, and of their war be field.
The foes that in repulsion never ceased,
Must he, who once has been the goodly beast
Of one or other, at whose beck he ran,
Constrain to make him serviceable man;
Offending neither, nor the natural claim
Each pressed, denying, for his true man's name.

Ah, what a sweat of anguish in that strife
To hold them fast conjoined within him still;
Submissive to his will
Along the road of life!
And marvel not he wavered if at whiles
The forward step met frowns, the backward smiles.
For Pleasure witched him her sweet cup to drain;

Repentance offered ecstasy in pain.
Delicious licence called it Nature's cry;
Ascetic rigours crushed the fleshly sigh;
A tread on shingle timed his lame advance
Flung as the die of Bacchanalian Chance,
He of the troubled marching army leaned
On godhead visible, on godhead screened;
The radiant roseate, the curtained white;
Yet sharp his battle strained through day, through night.

He drank of fictions, till celestial aid
Might seem accorded when he fawned and prayed;
Sagely the generous Giver circumspect,
To choose for grants the egregious, his elect;
And ever that imagined succour slew
The soul of brotherhood whence Reverence drew.

In fellowship religion has its founts:
The solitary his own God reveres:
Ascend no sacred Mounts
Our hungers or our fears.
As only for the numbers Nature's care
Is shown, and she the personal nothing heeds,

So to Divinity the spring of prayer
From brotherhood the one way upward leads.
Like the sustaining air
Are both for flowers and weeds.
But he who claims in spirit to be flower
Will find them both an air that doth devour.

Whereby he smelt his treason, who implored
External gifts bestowed but on the sword;
Beheld himself, with less and less disguise,
Through those blood-cataracts which dimmed his eyes,
His army's foe, condemned to strive and fail;
See a black adversary's ghost prevail;
Never, though triumphs hailed him, hope to win
While still the conflict tore his breast within.

Out of that agony, misread for those
Imprisoned Powers warring unappeased,
The ghost of his black adversary rose,
To smother light, shut heaven, show earth diseased.
And long with him was wrestling ere emerged
A mind to read in him the reflex shade
Of its fierce torment; this way, that way urged;
By craven compromises hourly swayed.

Crouched as a nestling, still its wings untried,
The man's mind opened under weight of cloud.
To penetrate the dark was it endowed;
Stood day before a vision shooting wide.
Whereat the spectral enemy lost form;
The traversed wilderness exposed its track.
He felt the far advance in looking back;
Thence trust in his foot forward through the storm.

Under the low-browed tempest's eye of ire,
That ere it lightened smote a coward heart,
Earth nerved her chastened son to hail athwart
All ventures perilous his shrouded Sire;
A stranger still, religiously divined;
Not yet with understanding read aright.
But when the mind, the cherishable mind,
The multitude's grave shepherd, took full flight,
Himself as mirror raised among his kind,
He saw, and first of brotherhood had sight:
Knew that his force to fly, his will to see,
His heart enlarged beyond its ribbed domain,
Had come of many a grip in mastery,
Which held conjoined the hostile rival twain,
And of his bosom made him lord, to keep

The starry roof of his unruffled frame
Awake to earth, to heaven, and plumb the deep
Below, above, aye with a wistful aim.

The mastering mind in him, by tempests blown,
By traitor inmates baited, upward burned;
Perforce of growth, the Master mind discerned,
The Great Unseen, nowise the Dark Unknown.
To whom unwittingly did he aspire
In wilderness, where bitter was his need:
To whom in blindness, as an earthy seed
For light and air, he struck through crimson mire.
But not ere he upheld a forehead lamp,
And viewed an army, once the seeming doomed,
All choral in its fruitful garden camp,
The spiritual the palpable illumed.

This gift of penetration and embrace,
His prize from tidal battles lost or won,
Reveals the scheme to animate his race:
How that it is a warfare but begun;
Unending; with no Power to interpose;
No prayer, save for strength to keep his ground,
Heard of the Highest; never battle's close,
The victory complete and victor crowned:

Nor solace in defeat, save from that sense
Of strength well spent, which is the strength renewed.
In manhood must he find his competence;
In his clear mind the spiritual food:
God being there while he his fight maintains;
Throughout his mind the Master Mind being there,
While he rejects the suicide despair;
Accepts the spur of explicable pains;
Obedient to Nature, not her slave:
Her lord, if to her rigid laws he bows;
Her dust, if with his conscience he plays knave,
And bids the Passions on the Pleasures browse:—
Whence Evil in a world unread before;
That mystery to simple springs resolved.
His God the Known, diviner to adore,
Shows Nature's savage riddles kindly solved.
Inconscient, insensitive, she reigns
In iron laws, though rapturous fair her face.
Back to the primal brute shall he retrace
His path, doth he permit to force her chains
A soft Persuader coursing through his veins,
An icy Huntress stringing to the chase:
What one the flash disdains;
What one so gives it grace.

But is he rightly manful in her eyes,
A splendid bloodless knight to gain the skies,
A blood-hot son of Earth by all her signs,
Desireing and desireable he shines;
As peaches, that have caught the sun's uprise
And kissed warm gold till noonday, even as vines.
Earth fills him with her juices, without fear
That she will cast him drunken down the steeps.
All woman is she to this man most dear;
He sows for bread, and she in spirit reaps:
She conscient, she sensitive, in him;
With him enwound, his brave ambition hers:
By him humaner made; by his keen spurs
Pricked to race past the pride in giant limb,
Her crazy adoration of big thews,
Proud in her primal sons, when crags they hurled,
Were thunder spitting lightnings on the world
In daily deeds, and she their evening Muse.

This man, this hero, works not to destroy;
This godlike—as the rock in ocean stands;—
He of the myriad eyes, the myriad hands
Creative; in his edifice has joy.
How strength may serve for purity is shown

When he himself can scourge to make it clean.
Withal his pitch of pride would not disown
A sober world that walks the balanced mean
Between its tempters, rarely overthrown:
And such at times his army's march has been.

Near is he to great Nature in the thought
Each changing Season intimately saith,
That nought save apparition knows the death;
To the God-lighted mind of man 'tis nought.
She counts not loss a word of any weight;
It may befal his passions and his greeds
To lose their treasures, like the vein that bleeds,
But life gone breathless will she reinstate.

Close on the heart of Earth his bosom beats,
When he the mandate lodged in it obeys,
Alive to breast a future wrapped in haze,
Strike camp, and onward, like the wind's cloud-fleets.
Unresting she, unresting he, from change
To change, as rain of cloud, as fruit of rain;
She feels her blood-tree throbbing in her grain,
Yet skyward branched, with loftier mark and range.

A READING OF LIFE

No miracle the sprout of wheat from clod,
She knows, nor growth of man in grisly brute;
But he, the flower at head and soil at root,
Is miracle, guides he the brute to God.
And that way seems he bound; that way the road,
With his dark-lantern mind, unled, alone,
Wearifully through forest-tracks unsown,
He travels, urged by some internal goad.

Dares he behold the thing he is, what thing
He would become is in his mind its child;
Astir, demanding birth to light and wing;
For battle prompt, by pleasure unbeguiled.
So moves he forth in faith, if he has made
His mind God's temple, dedicate to truth.
Earth's nourishing delights, no more gainsaid,
He tastes, as doth the bridegroom rich in youth.
Then knows he Love, that beckons and controls;
The star of sky upon his footway cast;
Then match in him who holds his tempters fast,
The body's love and mind's, whereof the soul's.
Then Earth her man for woman finds at last,
To speed the pair unto her goal of goals.

Or is 't the widowed's dream of her new mate?
Seen has she virulent days of heat in flood;
The sly Persuader snaky in his blood;
With her the barren Huntress alternate;
His rough refractory off on kicking heels
To rear; the man dragged rearward, shamed, amazed;
And as a torrent stream where cattle grazed,
His tumbled world. What, then, the faith she feels?
May not his aspect, like her own so fair
Reflexively, the central force belie,
And he, the once wild ocean storming sky,
Be rebel at the core? What hope is there?

'Tis that in each recovery he preserves,
Between his upper and his nether wit,
Sense of his march ahead, more brightly lit;
He less the shaken thing of lusts and nerves;
With such a grasp upon his brute as tells
Of wisdom from that vile relapsing spun.
A Sun goes down in wasted fire, a Sun
Resplendent springs, to faith refreshed compels.

THE CAGEING OF ARES

ILIAD, v. 385

[DEDICATED TO THE COUNCIL AT THE HAGUE, 1899]

How big of breast our Mother Gaea laughed
At sight of her boy Giants on the leap
Each over other as they neighboured home,
Fronting the day's descent across green slopes,
And up fired mountain crags their shadows danced.
Close with them in their fun, she scarce could guess,
Though these two billowy urchins reeked of craft,
It signalled some adventurous master-trick
To set Olympians buzzing in debate,
Lest it might be their godhead undermined,
The Tyranny menaced. Ephialtes high
On shoulders of his brother Otos waved
For the bull-bellowings given to grand good news,
Compact, complexioned in his gleeful roar
While Otos aped the prisoner's wrists and knees,
With doleful sniffs between recurrent howls;

Till Gaea's lap receiving them, they stretched,
And both upon her bosom shaken to speech,
Burst the hot story out of throats of both,
Like rocky head-founts, baffling in their glut
The hurried spout. And as when drifting storm
Disburdened loses clasp of here and yon
A peak, a forest mound, a valley's gleam
Of grass and the river's crooks and snaky coils,
Signification marvellous she caught,
Through gurglings of triumphant jollity,
Which now engulphed and now gave eye; at last
Subsided, and the serious naked deed,
With mountain-cloud of laughter banked around,
Stood in her sight confirmed: she could believe
That these, her sprouts of promise, her most prized,
These two made up of lion, bear and fox,
Her sportive, suckling mammoths, her young joy,
Still by the reckoning infants among men,
Had done the deed to strike the Titan host
In envy dumb, in envious heart elate:
These two combining strength and craft had snared,
Enmeshed, bound fast with thongs, discreetly caged
The blood-shedder, the terrible Lord of War;
Destroyer, ravager, superb in plumes;

The barren furrower of anointed fields;
The scarlet heel in towns, foul smoke to sky,
Her hated enemy, too long her scourge:
Great Ares. And they gagged his trumpet mouth
When they had seized on his implacable spear,
Hugged him to reedy helplessness despite
His godlike fury startled from amaze.
For he had eyed them nearing him in play,
The giant cubs, who gambolled and who snarled,
Unheeding his fell presence, by the mount
Ossa, beside a brushwood cavern; there
On Earth's original fisticuffs they called
For ease of sharp dispute: whereat the God,
Approving, deemed that sometime trained to arms,
Good servitors of Ares they would be,
And ply the pointed spear to dominate
Their rebel restless fellows, villain brood
Vowed to defy Immortals. So it chanced
Amusedly he watched them, and as one
The lusty twain were on him and they had him.
Breath to us, Powers of air, for laughter loud!
Cock of Olympus he, superb in plumes!
Bound like a wheaten sheaf by those two babes!
Because they knew our Mother Gaea loathed him,

Knew him the famine, pestilence and waste;
A desolating fire to blind the sight
With splendour built of fruitful things in ashes;
The gory chariot-wheel on cries for justice;
Her deepest planted and her liveliest voice,
Heard from the babe as from the broken crone.
Behold him in his vessel of bronze encased,
And tumbled down the cave. But rather look—
Ah, that the woman tattler had not sought,
Of all the Gods to let her secret fly,
Hermes, after the thirteen songful months!
Prompting the Dexterous to work his arts,
And shatter earth's delirious holiday,
Then first, as where the fountain runs a stream,
Resolving to composure on its throbs.
But see her in the Seasons through that year;
That one glad year and the fair opening month.
Had never our Great Mother such sweet face!
War with her, gentle war with her, each day
Her sons and daughters urged; at eve were flung,
On the morrow stood to challenge; in their strength
Renewed, indomitable; whereof they won,
From hourly wrestlings up to shut of lids,
Her ready secret: the abounding life

Returned for valiant labour: she and they
Defeated and victorious turn by turn;
By loss enriched, by overthrow restored.
Exchange of powers of this conflict came;
Defacement none, nor ever squandered force.
Is battle nature's mandate, here it reigned,
As music unto the hand that smote the strings;
And she the rosier from their showery brows,
They fruitful from her ploughed and harrowed breast.
Back to the primal rational of those
Who suck the teats of milky earth, and clasp
Stability in hatred of the insane,
Man stepped; with wits less fearful to pronounce
The mortal mind's concept of earth's divorced
Above; those beautiful, those masterful,
Those lawless. High they sit, and if descend,
Descend to reap, not sowing. Is it just?
Earth in her happy children asked that word,
Whereto within their breast was her reply.
Those beautiful, those masterful, those lawless,
Enjoy the life prolonged, outleap the years;
Yet they ('twas the Great Mother's voice inspired
The audacious thought), they, glorious over dust,
Outleap not her; disrooted from her soar,

To meet the certain fate of earth's divorced,
And clap lame wings across a wintry haze,
Up to the farthest bourne: immortal still,
Thenceforth innocuous; lovelier than when ruled
The Tyranny. This her voice within them told,
When softly the Great Mother chid her sons
Not of the giant brood, who did create
Those lawless Gods, first offspring of our brain
Set moving by an abject blood, that waked
To wanton under elements more benign,
And planted aliens on Olympian heights;—
Imagination's cradle poesy
Become a monstrous pressure upon men;—
Foes of good Gaea; until dispossessed
By light from her, born of the love of her,
Their lordship the illumined brain rejects
For earth's beneficent, the sons of Law,
Her other name. So spake she in their heart,
Among the wheat-blades proud of stalk; beneath
Young vine-leaves pushing timid fingers forth,
Confidently to cling. And when brown corn
Swayed armied ranks with softened cricket song,
With gold necks bent for any zephyr's kiss;
When vine-roots daily down a rubble soil

A READING OF LIFE

Drank fire of heaven athirst to swell the grape;
When swelled the grape, and in it held a ray,
Rich issue of the embrace of heaven and earth;
The very eye of passion drowsed by excess,
And yet a burning lion for the spring;
Then in that time of general cherishment,
Sweet breathing balm and flutes by cool woodside,
He the harsh rouser of ire being absent, caged,
Then did good Gaea's children gratefully
Lift hymns to Gods they judged, but praised for peace,
Delightful Peace, that answers Reason's call
Harmoniously and images her Law;
Reflects, and though short-lived as then, revives,
In memories made present on the brain
By natural yearnings, all the happy scenes;
The picture of an earth allied to heaven;
Between them the known smile behind black masks;
Rightly their various moods interpreted;
And frolic because toilful children borne
With larger comprehension of Earth's aim
At loftier, clearer, sweeter, by their aid.

THE NIGHT-WALK

Awakes for me and leaps from shroud
All radiantly the moon's own night
Of folded showers in streamer cloud;
Our shadows down the highway white
Or deep in woodland woven-boughed,
With yon and yon a stem alight.

I see marauder runagates
Across us shoot their dusky wink;
I hear the parliament of chats
In haws beside the river's brink;
And drops the vole off alder-banks,
To push his arrow through the stream.
These busy people had our thanks
For tickling sight and sound, but theme
They were not more than breath we drew
Delighted with our world's embrace:
The moss-root smell where beeches grew,
And watered grass in breezy space;

The silken heights, of ghostly bloom
Among their folds, by distance draped.
'Twas Youth, rapacious to consume,
That cried to have its chaos shaped:
Absorbing, little noting, still
Enriched, and thinking it bestowed;
With wistful looks on each far hill
For something hidden, something owed.
Unto his mantled sister, Day
Had given the secret things we sought
And she was grave and saintly gay;
At times she fluttered, spoke her thought;
She flew on it, then folded wings,
In meditation passing lone,
To breathe around the secret things,
Which have no word, and yet are known;
Of thirst for them are known, as air
Is health in blood: we gained enough
By this to feel it honest fare;
Impalpable, not barren, stuff.

A pride of legs in motion kept
Our spirits to their task meanwhile,
And what was deepest dreaming slept:

THE NIGHT-WALK

The posts that named the swallowed mile;
Beside the straight canal the hut
Abandoned; near the river's source
Its infant chirp; the shortest cut;
The roadway missed; were our discourse;
At times dear poets, whom some view
Transcendent or subdued evoked
To speak the memorable, the true,
The luminous as a moon uncloaked:
For proof that there, among earth's dumb,
A soul had passed and said our best.
Or it might be we chimed on some
Historic favourite's astral crest,
With part to reverence in its gleam,
And part to rivalry the shout:
So royal, unuttered, is youth's dream
Of power within to strike without.
But most the silences were sweet,
Like mothers' breasts, to bid it feel
It lived in such divine conceit
As envies aught we stamp for real.

To either then an untold tale
Was Life, and author, hero, we.

A READING OF LIFE

The chapters holding peaks to scale,
Or depths to fathom, made our glee;
For we were armed of inner fires,
Unbled in us the ripe desires;
And passion rolled a quiet sea,
Whereon was Love the phantom sail.

THE HUELESS LOVE

Unto that love must we through fire attain,
  Which those two held as breath of common air;
  The hands of whom were given in bond elsewhere;
Whom Honour was untroubled to restrain.

Midway the road of our life's term they met,
  And one another knew without surprise;
  Nor cared that beauty stood in mutual eyes;
Nor at their tardy meeting nursed regret.

To them it was revealed how they had found
  The kindred nature and the needed mind;
  The mate by long conspiracy designed;
The flower to plant in sanctuary ground.

Avowed in vigilant solicitude
  For either, what most lived within each breast
  They let be seen: yet every human test
Demanding righteousness approved them good.

A READING OF LIFE

She leaned on a strong arm, and little feared
  Abandonment to help if heaved or sank
  Her heart at intervals while Love looked blank,
Life rosier were she but less revered.

An arm that never shook did not obscure
  Her woman's intuition of the bliss—
  Their tempter's moment o'er the black abyss,
Across the narrow plank—he could abjure.

Then came a day that clipped for him the thread,
  And their first touch of lips, as he lay cold,
  Was all of earthly in their love untold,
Beyond all earthly known to them who wed.

So has there come the gust at South-west flung
  By sudden volt on eves of freezing mist,
  When sister snowflake sister snowdrop kissed,
And one passed out, and one the bell-head hung.

SONG IN THE SONGLESS

They have no song, the sedges dry,
    And still they sing.
It is within my breast they sing,
    As I pass by.
Within my breast they touch a string,
    They wake a sigh.
There is but sound of sedges dry;
    In me they sing.

A READING OF LIFE

UNION IN DISSEVERANCE

Sunset worn to its last vermilion he;
She that star overhead in slow descent:
That white star with the front of angel she;
He undone in his rays of glory spent.

Halo, fair as the bow-shot at his rise,
He casts round her, and knows his hour of rest
Incomplete, were the light for which he dies
Less like joy of the dove that wings to nest.

Lustrous momently, near on earth she sinks;
Life's full throb over breathless and abased:
Yet stand they, though impalpable the links,
One, more one than the bridally embraced.

THE BURDEN OF STRENGTH

If that thou hast the gift of strength, then know
Thy part is to uplift the trodden low;
Else in a giant's grasp until the end
A hopeless wrestler shall thy soul contend.

THE MAIN REGRET

WRITTEN FOR THE CHARING CROSS ALBUM

I

Seen, too clear and historic within us, our sins of omission
Frown when the Autumn days strike us all ruthlessly bare.
They of our mortal diseases find never healing physician;
Errors they of the soul, past the one hope to repair.

II

Sunshine might we have been unto seed under soil, or have scattered
Seed to ascendant suns brighter than any that shone.
Even the limp-legged beggar a sick desperado has flattered
Back to a half-sloughed life cheered by the mere human tone.

A READING OF LIFE

ALTERNATION

Between the fountain and the rill
I passed, and saw the mighty will
To leap at sky; the careless run,
As earth would lead her little son.

Beneath them throbs an urgent well,
That here is play, and there is war.
I know not which had most to tell
Of whence we spring and what we are.

HAWARDEN

When comes the lighted day for men to read
Life's meaning, with the work before their hands
Till this good gift of breath from debt is freed,
Earth will not hear her children's wailful bands
Deplore the chieftain fall'n in sob and dirge;
Nor they look where is darkness, but on high.
The sun that dropped down our horizon's verge
Illumes his labours through the travelled sky,
Now seen in sum, most glorious; and 'tis known
By what our warrior wrought we hold him fast.
A splendid image built of man has flown;
His deeds inspired of God outstep a Past.
Ours the great privilege to have had one
Among us who celestial tasks has done.

AT THE CLOSE

To Thee, dear God of Mercy, both appeal,
Who straightway sound the call to arms. Thou know'st;
And that black spot in each embattled host,
Spring of the blood-stream, later wilt reveal.
Now is it red artillery and white steel;
Till on a day will ring the victor's boast,
That 'tis Thy chosen towers uppermost,
Where Thy rejected grovels under heel.
So in all times of man's descent insane
To brute, did strength and craft combining strike,
Even as a God of Armies, his fell blow.
But at the close he entered Thy domain,
Dear God of Mercy, and if lion-like
He tore the fall'n, the Eternal was his Foe.

FOREST HISTORY

I

Beneath the vans of doom did men pass in.
  Heroic who came out; for round them hung
  A wavering phantom's red volcano tongue,
With league-long lizard tail and fishy fin:

II

Old Earth's original Dragon; there retired
  To his last fastness; overthrown by few.
  Him a laborious thrust of roadway slew.
Then man to play devorant straight was fired.

III

More intimate became the forest fear
  While pillared darkness hatched malicious life
  At either elbow, wolf or gnome or knife
And wary slid the glance from ear to ear.

IV

In chillness, like a clouded lantern-ray,
The forest's heart of fog on mossed morass,
On purple pool and silky cotton-grass,
Revealed where lured the swallower byway.

V

Dead outlook, flattened back with hard rebound
Off walls of distance, left each mounted height.
It seemed a giant hag-fiend, churning spite
Of humble human being, held the ground.

VI

Through friendless wastes, through treacherous wood-
land, slow
The feet sustained by track of feet pursued
Pained steps, and found the common brotherhood
By sign of Heaven indifferent, Nature foe.

VII

Anon a mason's work amazed the sight,
And long-frocked men, called Brothers, there abode.
They pointed up, bowed head, and dug and sowed;
Whereof was shelter, loaf, and warm firelight.

VIII

What words they taught were nails to scratch the
head.
Benignant works explained the chanting brood.
Their monastery lit black solitude,
As one might think a star that heavenward led.

IX

Uprose a fairer nest for weary feet,
Like some gold flower nightly inward curled,
Where gentle maidens fled a roaring world,
Or played with it, and had their white retreat.

X

Into big books of metal clasps they pored.
They governed, even as men; they welcomed lays.
The treasures women are whose aim is praise
Was shown in them: the Garden half restored.

XI

A deluge billow scoured the land off seas,
With widened jaws, and slaughter was its foam.
For food, for clothing, ambush, refuge, home,
The lesser savage offered bogs and trees.

XII

Whence reverence round grey-haired story grew;
And inmost spots of ancient horror shone
As temples under beams of trials bygone;
For in them sang brave times with God in view.

XIII

Till now trim homesteads bordered spaces green,
Like night's first little stars through clearing showers.
Was rumoured how a castle's falcon towers
The wilderness commanded with fierce mien.

XIV

Therein a serious Baron stuck his lance;
For minstrel songs a beauteous Dame would pout.
Gay nights and sombre, felon or devout,
Pricked onward, bound for their unsung romance.

XV

It might be that two errant lords across
The block of each came edged, and at sharp cry
They charged forthwith, the better man to try.
One rode his way, one couched on quiet moss.

XVI

Perchance a lady sweet, whose lord lay slain,
The robbers into gruesome durance drew.
Swift should her hero come, like lightning's blue!
She prayed for him, as crackling drought for rain.

XVII

As we, that ere the worst her hero haps,
Of Angels guided, nigh that loathly den:
A toady cave beside an ague fen,
Where long forlorn the lone dog whines and yaps.

XVIII

By daylight now the forest fear could read
Itself, and at new wonders chuckling went.
Straight for the roebuck's neck the bowman spent
A dart that laughed at distance and at speed.

XIX

Right loud the bugle's hallali elate
Rang forth of merry dingles round the tors;
And deftest hand was he from foreign wars,
But soon he hailed the home-bred yeoman mate.

XX

Before the blackbird pecked the turf they woke;
At dawn the deer's wet nostrils blew their last.
To forest, haunt of runs and prime repast,
With paying blows, the yokel strained his yoke.

XXI

The city urchin mooned on forest air,
On grassy sweeps and flying arrows, thick
As swallows o'er smooth streams, and sighed him sick
For thinking that his dearer home was there.

XXII

Familiar, still unseized, the forest sprang
An old-world echo, like no mortal thing.
The hunter's horn might wind a jocund ring,
But held in ear it had a chilly clang.

XXIII

Some shadow lurked aloof of ancient time;
Some warning haunted any sound prolonged,
As though the leagues of woodland held them wronged
To hear an axe and see a township climb.

XXIV

The forest's erewhile emperor at eve
Had voice when lowered heavens drummed for gales.
At midnight a small people danced the dales,
So thin that they might dwindle through a sieve.

XXV

Ringed mushrooms told of them, and in their throats,
Old wives that gathered herbs and knew too much.
The pensioned forester beside his crutch
Struck showers from embers at those bodeful notes.

XXVI

Came then the one, all ear, all eye, all heart;
Devourer, and insensibly devoured;
In whom the city over forest flowered,
The forest wreathed the city's drama-mart.

XXVII

There found he in new form that Dragon old,
From tangled solitudes expelled; and taught
How blindly each its antidote besought;
For either's breath the needs of either told.

XXVIII

Now deep in woods, with song no sermon's drone,
He showed what charm the human concourse works:
Amid the press of men, what virtue lurks
Where bubble sacred wells of wildness lone.

XXIX

Our conquest these: if haply we retain
The reverence that ne'er will overrun
Due boundaries of realms from Nature won,
Nor let the poet's awe in rapture wane.

A GARDEN IDYL

With sagest craft Arachne worked
Her web, and at a corner lurked,
Awaiting what should plump her soon,
To case it in the death-cocoon.
Sagaciously her home she chose
For visits that would never close;
Inside my chalet-porch her feast
Plucked all the winds but chill North-east.

The finished structure, bar on bar,
Had snatched from light to form a star,
And struck on sight, when quick with dews,
Like music of the very Muse.
Great artists pass our single sense;
We hear in seeing, strung to tense;
Then haply marvel, groan mayhap,
To think such beauty means a trap.
But Nature's genius, even man's
At best, is practical in plans;

Subservient to the needy thought,
However rare the weapon wrought.
As long as Nature holds it good
To urge her creatures' quest for food
Will beauty stamp the just intent
Of weapons upon service bent.
For beauty is a flower of roots
Embedded lower than our boots;
Out of the primal strata springs,
And shows for crown of useful things

Arachne's dream of prey to size
Aspired; so she could nigh despise
The puny specks the breezes round
Supplied, and let them shake unwound;
Assured of her fat fly to come;
Perhaps a blue, the spider's plum;
Who takes the fatal odds in fight,
And gives repast an appetite,
By plunging, whizzing, till his wings
Are webbed, and in the lists he swings
A shrouded lump, for her to see
Her banquet in her victory.

This matron of the unnumbered threads,
One day of dandelions' heads
Distributing their gray perruques
Up every gust, I watched with looks
Discreet beside the chalet-door;
And gracefully a light wind bore,
Direct upon my webster's wall,
A monster in the form of ball;
The mildest captive ever snared,
That neither struggled nor despaired,
On half the net invading hung,
And plain as in her mother tongue,
While low the weaver cursed her lures,
Remarked, 'You have me; I am yours.'

Thrice magnified, in phantom shape,
Her dream of size she saw, agape.
Midway the vast round-raying beard
A desiccated midge appeared;
Whose body pricked the name of meal,
Whose hair had growth in earth's unreal;
Provocative of dread and wrath,
Contempt and horror, in one froth,

Inextricable, insensible,
His poison presence there would dwell,
Declaring him her dream fulfilled,
A catch to compliment the skilled;
And she reduced to beaky skin,
Disgraceful among kith and kin.

Against her corner, humped and aged,
Arachne wrinkled, past enraged,
Beyond disgust or hope in guile.
Ridiculously volatile
He seemed to her last spark of mind;
And that in pallid ash declined
Beneath the blow by knowledge dealt,
Wherein throughout her frame she felt
That he, the light wind's libertine,
Without a scoff, without a grin,
And mannered like the courtly few,
Who merely danced when light winds blew,
Impervious to beak and claws,
Tradition's ruinous Whitebeard was;
Of whom, as actors in old scenes,
Had grannam weavers warned their weans,

With word, that less than feather-weight,
He smote the web like bolt of Fate.

This muted drama, hour by hour,
I watched amid a world in flower,
Ere yet Autumnal threads had laid
Their gray-blue o'er the grass's blade,
And still along the garden-run
The blindworm stretched him, drunk of sun.
Arachne crouched unmoved; perchance
Her visitor performed a dance;
She puckered thinner; he the same
As when on that light wind he came.

Next day was told what deeds of night
Were done; the web had vanished quite;
With it the strange opposing pair;
And listless waved on vacant air,
For her adieu to heart's content,
A solitary filament.

A READING OF LIFE

FORESIGHT AND PATIENCE

Sprung of the father blood, the mother brain,
Are they who point our pathway and sustain.
They rarely meet; one soars, one walks retired.
When they do meet, it is our earth inspired.

To see Life's formless offspring and subdue
Desire of times unripe, we have these two,
Whose union is right reason: join they hands,
The world shall know itself and where it stands;
What cowering angel and what upright beast
Make man, behold, nor count the low the least,
Nor less the stars have round it than its flowers.
When these two meet, a point of time is ours.

As in a land of waterfalls, that flow
Smooth for the leap on their great voice below,
Some eddies near the brink borne swift along
Will capture hearing with the liquid song,

So, while the headlong world's imperious force
Resounded under, heard I these discourse.

First words, where down my woodland walk she led,
To her blind sister Patience, Foresight said:

—Your faith in me appals, to shake my own,
When still I find you in this mire alone.

—The few steps taken at a funeral pace
By men had slain me but for those you trace.

—Look I once back, a broken pinion I:
Black as the rebel angels rained from sky!

—Needs must you drink of me while here you live,
And make me rich in feeling I can give.

—A brave To-be is dawn upon my brow:
Yet must I read my sister for the How.
My daisy better knows her God of beams
Than doth an eagle that to mount him seems.
She hath the secret never fieriest reach
Of wing shall master till men hear her teach.

—Liker the clod flaked by the driving plough,
My semblance when I have you not as now.

A READING OF LIFE

The quiet creatures who escape mishap
Bear likeness to pure growths of the green sap:
A picture of the settled peace desired
By cowards shunning strife or strivers tired.
I listen at their breasts: is there no jar
Of wrestlings and of stranglings, dead they are,
And such a picture as the piercing mind
Ranks beneath vegetation. Not resigned
Are my true pupils while the world is brute.
What edict of the stronger keeps me mute,
Stronger impels the motion of my heart.
I am not Resignation's counterpart.
If that I teach, 'tis little the dry word,
Content, but how to savour hope deferred.
We come of earth, and rich of earth may be;
Soon carrion if very earth are we!
The coursing veins, the constant breath, the use
Of sleep, declare that strife allows short truce;
Unless we clasp decay, accept defeat,
And pass despised; 'a-cold for lack of heat,'
Like other corpses, but without death's plea.

My sister calls for battle; is it she?

—Rather a world of pressing men in arms,
Than stagnant, where the sensual piper charms
Each drowsy malady and coiling vice
With dreams of ease whereof the soul pays price!
No home is here for peace while evil breeds,
While error governs, none; and must the seeds
You sow, you that for long have reaped disdain,
Lie barren at the doorway of the brain,
Let stout contention drive deep furrows, blood
Moisten, and make new channels of its flood!

—My sober little maid, when we meet first,
Drinks of me ever with an eager thirst.
So can I not of her till circumstance
Drugs cravings. Here we see how men advance
A doubtful foot, but circle if much stirred,
Like dead weeds on whipped waters. Shout the word
Prompting their hungers, and they grandly march,
As to band-music under Victory's arch.
Thus was it, and thus is it; save that then
The beauty of frank animals had men.

—Observe them, and down rearward for a term,
Gaze to the primal twistings of the worm.

Thence look this way, across the fields that show
Men's early form of speech for Yes and No.
My sister a bruised infant's utterance had;
And issuing stronger, to mankind 'twas mad.
I knew my home where I had choice to feel
The toad beneath a harrow or a heel.

—Speak of this Age.

—When you it shall discern
Bright as you are, to me the Age will turn.

—For neither of us has it any care;
Its learning is through Science to despair.

—Despair lies down and grovels, grapples not
With evil, casts the burden of its lot.
This Age climbs earth.

—To challenge heaven.

—Not less
The lower deeps. It laughs at Happiness!
That know I, though the echoes of it wail,
For one step upward on the crags you scale.

FORESIGHT AND PATIENCE

Brave is the Age wherein the word will rust,
Which means our soul asleep or body's lust,
Until from warmth of many breasts, that beat
A temperate common music, sunlike heat
The happiness not predatory sheds!

—But your fierce Yes and No of butting heads,
Now rages to outdo a horny Past.
Shades of a wild Destroyer on the vast
Are thrown by every novel light upraised.
The world's whole round smokes ominously, amazed
And trembling as its pregnant Ætna swells.
Combustibles on hot combustibles
Run piling, for one spark to roll in fire
The mountain-torrent of infernal ire
And leave the track of devils where men built.
Perceptive of a doom, the sinner's guilt
Confesses in a cry for help shrill loud,
If drops the chillness of a passing cloud,
To conscience, reason, human love; in vain:
None save they but the souls which them contain.
No extramural God, the God within
Alone gives aid to city charged with sin.

A READING OF LIFE

A world that for the spur of fool and knave
Sweats in its laboratory, what shall save?
But men who ply their wits in such a school
Must pray the mercy of the knave and fool.

—Much have I studied hard Necessity!
To know her Wisdom's mother, and that we
May deem the harshness of her later cries
In labour a sure goad to prick the wise,
If men among the warnings which convulse
Can gravely dread without the craven's pulse.
Long ere the rising of this age of ours,
The knave and fool were stamped as monstrous Powers.
Of human lusts and lassitudes they spring,
And are as lasting as the parent thing.
Yet numbering locust hosts, bent they to drill,
They might o'ermatch and have mankind at will.
Behold such army gathering; ours the spur,
No scattered foe to face, but Lucifer.
Not fool or knave is now the enemy
O'ershadowing men, 'tis Folly, Knavery!
A sea; nor stays that sea the bastioned beach.
Now must the brother soul alive in each

His traitorous individual devildom
Hold subject lest the grand destruction come.
Dimly men see it menacing apace
To overthrow, perchance uproot the race.
Within, without, they are a field of tares:
Fruitfuller for them when the contest squares,
And wherefore warrior service they must yield,
Shines visible as life on either field.
That is my comfort, following shock on shock,
Which sets faith quaking on their firmest rock.
Since with his weapons, all the arms of Night,
Frail men have challenged Lucifer to fight,
Have matched in hostile ranks, enrolled, erect,
The human and Satanic intellect,
Determined for their uses to control
What forces on the earth and under roll,
Their granite rock runs igneous; now they stand
Pledged to the heavens for safety of their land.
They cannot learn save grossly, gross that are:
Through fear they learn whose aid is good in war.

—My sister, as I read them in my glass,
Their field of tares they take for pasture grass.

How waken them that have not any bent
Save browsing—the concrete indifferent!
Friend Lucifer supplies them solid stuff:
They fear not for the race when full the trough.
They have much fear of giving up the ghost;
And these are of mankind the unnumbered host.

—If I could see with you, and did not faint
In beating wing, the future I would paint.
Those massed indifferents will learn to quake:
Now meanwhile is another mass awake,
Once denser than the grunters of the sty.
If I could see with you! Could I but fly!

—The length of days that you with them have housed,
An outcast else, approves their cause espoused.

—O true, they have a cause, and woe for us,
While still they have a cause too piteous!
Yet, happy for us when, their cause defined,
They walk no longer with a stumbler blind,
And quicken in the virtue of their cause,
To think me a poor mouther of old saws!
I wait the issue of a battling Age;
The toilers with your 'troughsters' now engage;

Instructing them through their acutest sense,
How close the dangers of indifference!
Already have my people shown their worth,
More love they light, which folds the love of Earth.
That love to love of labour leads: thence love
Of humankind—earth's incense flung above.

—Admit some other features: Faithless, mean;
Encased in matter; vowed to Gods obscene;
Contemptuous of the impalpable, it swells
On Doubt; for pastime swallows miracles;
And if I bid it face what *I* observe,
Declares me hoodwinked by my optic nerve!

—Oft has your prophet, for reward of toil,
Seen nests of seeming cockatrices coil:
Disowned them as the unholiest of Time,
Which were his offspring, born of flame on slime.
Nor him, their sire, have known the filial fry:
As little as Time's earliest knew the sky.
Perchance among them shoots a lustrous flame
At intervals, in proof of whom they came.
To strengthen our foundations is the task
Of this tough Age; not in your beams to bask,

Though, lighted by your beams, down mining caves
The rock it blasts, the hoarded foulness braves.
My sister sees no round beyond her mood;
To hawk this Age has dressed her head in hood.
Out of the course of ancient ruts and grooves,
It moves: O much for me to say it moves!
About his Æthiop Highlands Nile is Nile,
Though not the stream of the paternal smile:
And where his tide of nourishment he drives,
An Abyssinian wantonness revives.
Calm as his lotus-leaf to-day he swims;
He is the yellow crops, the rounded limbs,
The Past yet flowing, the fair time that fills;
Breath of all mouths and grist of many mills.
To-morrow, warning none with tempest-showers,
He is the vast Insensate who devours
His golden promise over leagues of seed,
Then sits in a smooth lake upon the deed.
The races which on barbarous force begin
Inherit onward of their origin,
And cancelled blessings will the current length
Reveal till they know need of shaping strength.
'Tis not in men to recognize the need
Before they clash in hosts, in hosts they bleed.

Then may sharp suffering their nature grind;
Of rabble passions grow the chieftain Mind.
Yet mark where still broad Nile boasts thousands fed,
For tens up the safe mountains at his head.
Few would be fed, not far his course prolong,
Save for the troublous blood which makes him strong.

—That rings of truth! More do your people thrive;
Your Many are more merrily alive
Than erewhile when I gloried in the page
Of radiant singer and anointed sage.
Greece was my lamp: burnt out for lack of oil;
Rome, Python Rome, prey of its robber spoil!
All structures built upon a narrow space
Must fall, from having not your hosts for base.
O thrice must one be you, to see them shift
Along their desert flats, here dash, there drift;
With faith, that of privations and spilt blood,
Comes Reason armed to clear or bank the flood!
And thrice must one be you, to wait release
From duress in the swamp of their increase.
At which oppressive scene, beyond arrest,
A darkness not with stars of heaven dressed

Philosophers behold; desponding view
Your Many nourished, starved my brilliant few;
Then flinging heels, as charioteers the reins,
Dive down the fumy Ætna of their brains.
Belated vessels on a rising sea,
They seem: they pass!

—But not Philosophy!

—Ay, be we faithful to ourselves: despise
Nought but the coward in us! That way lies
The wisdom making passage through our slough.
Am I not heard, my head to Earth shall bow;
Like her, shall wait to see, and seeing wait.
Philosophy is Life's one match for Fate.
That photosphere of our high fountain One,
Our spirit's Lord and Reason's fostering sun,
Philosophy, shall light us in the shade,
Warm in the frost, make Good our aim and aid.
Companioned by the sweetest, ay renewed,
Unconquerable, whose aim for aid is Good!
Advantage to the Many: that we name
God's voice; have there the surety in our aim.
This thought unto my sister do I owe,
And irony and satire off me throw.

FORESIGHT AND PATIENCE

They crack a childish whip, drive puny herds,
Where numbers crave their sustenance in words.
Now let the perils thicken: clearer seen,
Your Chieftain Mind mounts over them serene.
Who never yet of scattered lamps was born
To speed a world, a marching world to warn,
But sunward from the vivid Many springs,
Counts conquest but a step, and through disaster sings.

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE ILIAD

FRAGMENTS OF THE ILIAD IN ENGLISH HEXAMETER VERSE

ILIAD, i. 149

THE INVECTIVE OF ACHILLES

'Heigh me! brazen of front, thou glutton for plunder, how can one,
Servant here to thy mandates, heed thee among our Achaians,
Either the mission hie on or stoutly do fight with the foemen?
I, not hither I fared on account of the spear-armèd Trojans,
Pledged to the combat; they unto me have in nowise a harm done;
Never have they, of a truth, come lifting my horses or oxen;
Never in deep-soiled Phthia, the nurser of heroes, my harvests

Ravaged, they; for between us is numbered full many
a darksome
Mountain, ay, therewith too the stretch of the windy
sea-waters.
O hugely shameless! thee did we follow to hearten
thee, justice
Pluck from the Dardans for him, Menelaos, thee too,
thou dog-eyed!
Whereof little thy thought is, nought whatever thou
reckest.
Worse, it is thou whose threat 'tis to ravish my prize
from me, portion
Won with much labour, the which my gift from the
sons of Achaia.
Never, in sooth, have I known my prize equal thine
when Achaians
Gave some flourishing populous Trojan town up to
pillage.
Nay, sure, mine were the hands did most in the storm
of the combat,
Yet when came peradventure share of the booty
amongst us,
Bigger to thee went the prize, while I some small
blessèd thing bore

Off to the ships, my share of reward for my toil in the bloodshed!

So now go I to Phthia, for better by much it beseems me

Homeward go with my beaked ships now, and I hold not in prospect,

I being outraged, thou mayst gather here plunder and wealth-store.'

i. 225

'Bibber besotted, with scowl of a cur, having heart of a deer, thou!
Never to join to thy warriors armed for the press of the conflict,
Never for ambush forth with the princeliest sons of Achaia
Dared thy soul, for to thee that thing would have looked as a death-stroke.
Sooth, more easy it seems, down the lengthened array of Achaians,
Snatch at the prize of the one whose voice has been lifted against thee.
Ravening king of the folk, for that thou hast thy rule over abjects;
Else, son of Atreus, now were this outrage on me thy last one.
Nay, but I tell thee, and I do swear a big oath on it likewise:

Yea, by the sceptre here, and it surely bears branches and leaf-buds
Never again, since first it was lopped from its trunk on the mountains,
No more sprouting; for round it all clean has the sharp metal clipped off
Leaves and the bark; ay, verily now do the sons of Achaia,
Guardian hands of the counsels of Zeus, pronouncing the judgement,
Hold it aloft; so now unto thee shall the oath have its portent;
Loud will the cry for Achilles burst from the sons of Achaia
Throughout the army, and thou chafe powerless, though in an anguish,
How to give succour when vast crops down under man-slaying Hector
Tumble expiring; and thou deep in thee shalt tear at thy heart-strings,
Rage-wrung, thou, that in nought thou didst honour the flower of Achaians.'

ILIAD, ii. 455

MARSHALLING OF THE ACHAIANS

Like as a terrible fire feeds fast on a forest enormous,
Up on a mountain height, and the blaze of it radiates round far,
So on the bright blest arms of the host in their march did the splendour
Gleam wide round through the circle of air right up to the sky-vault.
They, now, as when swarm thick in the air multitudinous winged flocks,
Be it of geese or of cranes or the long-necked troops of the wild-swans,
Off that Asian mead, by the flow of the waters of Kaïstros;
Hither and yon fly they, and rejoicing in pride of their pinions,
Clamour, shaped to their ranks, and the mead all about them resoundeth;

MARSHALLING OF THE ACHAIANS

So those numerous tribes from their ships and their shelterings poured forth
On that plain of Scamander, and horrible rumbled beneath them
Earth to the quick-paced feet of the men and the tramp of the horse-hooves.
Stopped they then on the fair-flower'd field of Scamander, their thousands
Many as leaves and the blossoms born of the flowerful season.
Even as countless hot-pressed flies in their multitudes traverse,
Clouds of them, under some herdsman's wonning, where then are the milk-pails
Also, full of their milk, in the bountiful season of spring-time;
Even so thickly the long-haired sons of Achaia the plain held,
Prompt for the dash at the Trojan host, with the passion to crush them.
Those, likewise, as the goatherds, eyeing their vast flocks of goats, know
Easily one from the other when all get mixed o'er the pasture,

So did the chieftains rank them here there in their places for onslaught,
Hard on the push of the fray; and among them King Agamemnon,
He, for his eyes and his head, as when Zeus glows glad in his thunder,
He with the girdle of Ares, he with the breast of Poseidon.

ILIAD, xi. 148

AGAMEMNON IN THE FIGHT

These, then, he left, and away where ranks were now clashing the thickest,
Onward rushed, and with him rushed all of the bright-greaved Achaians.
Foot then footmen slew, that were flying from direful compulsion,
Horse at the horsemen (up from off under them mounted the dust-cloud,
Up off the plain, raised up cloud-thick by the thundering horse-hooves)
Hewed with the sword's sharp edge; and so meanwhile Lord Agamemnon
Followed, chasing and slaughtering aye, on-urgeing the Argives.
Now, as when fire voracious catches the unclippèd woodland,

This way bears it and that the great whirl of the wind, and the scrubwood
Stretches uptorn, flung forward alength by the fire's fury rageing,
So beneath Atreides Agamemnon heads of the scattered
Trojans fell; and in numbers amany the horses, neck-stiffened,
Rattled their vacant cars down the roadway gaps of the war-field,
Missing the blameless charioteers, but, for these, they were outstretched
Flat upon earth, far dearer to vultures than to their home-mates.

ILIAD, xi. 378

PARIS AND DIOMEDES

So he, with a clear shout of laughter,
Forth of his ambush leapt, and he vaunted him, uttering thiswise:
'Hit thou art! not in vain flew the shaft; how by rights it had pierced thee
Into the undermost gut, therewith to have rived thee of life-breath!
Following that had the Trojans plucked a new breath from their direst,
They all frighted of thee, as the goats bleat in flight from a lion.'
Then unto him untroubled made answer stout Diomedes:
'Bow-puller, jiber, thy bow for thy glorying, spyer at virgins!
If that thou dared'st face me here out in the open with weapons,

Nothing then would avail thee thy bow and thy thick
shot of arrows.
Now thou plumest thee vainly because of a graze of
my footsole;
Reck I as were that stroke from a woman or some
pettish infant.
Aye flies blunted the dart of the man that's emascu-
late, noughtworth!
Otherwise hits, forth flying from me, and but strikes
it the slightest,
My keen shaft, and it numbers a man of the dead
fallen straightway.
Torn, troth, then are the cheeks of the wife of that
man fallen slaughtered,
Orphans his babes, full surely he reddens the earth
with his blood-drops,
Rotting, round him the birds, more numerous they
than the women.'

ILIAD, XIV. 283

HYPNOS ON IDA

They then to fountain-abundant Ida, mother of wild beasts,
Came, and they first left ocean to fare over mainland at Lektos,
Where underneath of their feet waved loftiest growths of the woodland.
There hung Hypnos fast, ere the vision of Zeus was observant,
Mounted upon a tall pine-tree, tallest of pines that on Ida
Lustily spring off soil for the shoot up aloft into aether.
There did he sit well-cloaked by the wide-branched pine for concealment,
That loud bird, in his form like, that perched high up in the mountains,
Chalkis is named by the Gods, but of mortals known as Kymindis.

ILIAD, XIV. 394

CLASH IN ARMS OF THE ACHAIANS AND TROJANS

Not the sea-wave so bellows abroad when it bursts upon shingle,
Whipped from the sea's deeps up by the terrible blast of the Northwind;
Nay, nor is ever the roar of the fierce fire's rush so arousing,
Down along mountain-glades, when it surges to kindle a woodland;
Nay, nor so tonant thunders the stress of the gale in the oak-trees'
Foliage-tresses high, when it rages to raveing its utmost;
As rose then stupendous the Trojans' cry and Achaians',
Dread upshouting as one when together they clashed in the conflict.

THE HORSES OF ACHILLES

ILIAD, XVII. 426

THE HORSES OF ACHILLES

So now the horses of Aiakides, off wide of the war-ground,
Wept, since first they were ware of their charioteer overthrown there,
Cast down low in the whirl of the dust under man-slaying Hector.
Sooth, meanwhile, then did Automedon, brave son of Diores,
Oft, on the one hand, urge them with flicks of the swift whip, and oft, too,
Coax entreatingly, hurriedly; whiles did he angrily threaten.
Vainly, for these would not to the ships, to the Hellespont spacious,
Backward turn, nor be whipped to the battle among the Achaians.

Nay, as a pillar remains immoveable, fixed on the tombstone,
Haply, of some dead man or it may be a woman thereunder;
Even like hard stood they there attached to the glorious war-car,
Earthward bowed with their heads; and of them so lamenting incessant
Ran the hot teardrops downward on to the earth from their eyelids,
Mourning their charioteer; all their lustrous manes dusty-clotted,
Right side and left of the yoke-ring tossed, to the breadth of the yoke-bow.

Now when the issue of Kronos beheld that sorrow, his head shook
Pitying them for their grief, these words then he spake in his bosom;
'Why, ye hapless, gave we to Peleus you, to a mortal
Master; ye that are ageless both, ye both of you deathless!

Was it that ye among men most wretched should
come to have heart-grief?
'Tis most true, than the race of these men is there
wretcheder nowhere
Aught over earth's range found that is gifted with
breath and has movement.'

TRANSLATION FROM MISTRAL

THE MARES OF THE CAMARGUE

FROM THE 'MIRÈIO' OF MISTRAL

A hundred mares, all white! their manes
Like mace-reed of the marshy plains
Thick-tufted, wavy, free o' the shears:
And when the fiery squadron rears
Bursting at speed, each mane appears
Even as the white scarf of a fay
Floating upon their necks along the heavens away.

O race of humankind, take shame!
For never yet a hand could tame,
Nor bitter spur that rips the flanks subdue
The mares of the Camargue. I have known,
By treason snared, some captives shown;
Expatriate from their native Rhone,
Led off, their saline pastures far from view:

And on a day, with prompt rebound,
They have flung their riders to the ground,
And at a single gallop, scouring free,
Wide nostril'd to the wind, twicé ten
Of long marsh-leagues devour'd, and then,
Back to the Vacarés again,
After ten years of slavery just to breathe salt sea.

For of this savage race unbent
The ocean is the element.
Of old escaped from Neptune's car, full sure
Still with the white foam fleck'd are they,
And when the sea puffs black from grey,
And ships part cables, loudly neigh
The stallions of Camargue, all joyful in the roar;

And keen as a whip they lash and crack
Their tails that drag the dust, and back
Scratch up the earth, and feel, entering their flesh,
where he,
The God, drives deep his trident teeth,
Who in one horror, above, beneath,
Bids storm and watery deluge seethe,
And shatters to their depths the abysses of the sea.

Cant. iv.

LAST POEMS

ON COMO

A rainless darkness drew o'er the lake
As we lay in our boat with oars unshipped.
It seemed neither cloud nor water awake,
And forth of the low black curtain slipped
Thunderless lightning. Scoff no more
At angels imagined in downward flight
For the daughters of earth as fabled of yore:
Here was beauty might well invite
Dark heavens to gleam with the fire of a sun
Resurgent; here the exchanged embrace
Worthy of heaven and earth made one.

And witness it, ye of the privileged space,
Said the flash; and the mountains, as from an abyss
For quivering seconds leaped up to attest
That given, received, renewed was the kiss;
The lips to lips and the breast to breast;
All in a glory of ecstasy, swift
As an eagle at prey, and pure as the prayer

Of an infant bidden joined hands uplift
To be guarded through darkness by spirits of air,
Ere setting the sails of sleep till day.
Slowly the low cloud swung, and far
It panted along its mirrored way;
Above loose threads one sanctioning star,
The wonder of what had been witnessed, sealed,
And with me still as in crystal glassed
Are the depths alight, the heavens revealed,
Where on to the Alps the muteness passed.

THE WILD ROSE

High climbs June's wild rose,
Her bush all blooms in a swarm;
And swift from the bud she blows,
In a day when the wooer is warm;
Frank to receive and give,
Her bosom is open to bee and sun:
Pride she has none,
Nor shame she knows;
Happy to live.

Unlike those of the garden nigh,
Her queenly sisters enthroned by art;
Loosening petals one by one
To the fiery Passion's dart
Superbly shy.
For them in some glory of hair,
Or nest of the heaving mounds to lie,
Or path of the bride bestrew.
Ever are they the theme for song.

But nought of that is her share.
Hardly from wayfarers tramping along,
A glance they care not to renew.

And she at a word of the claims of kin,
Shrinks to the level of roads and meads:
She is only a plain princess of the weeds,
As an outcast witless of sin:
Much disregarded, save by the few
Who love her, that has not a spot of deceit,
No promise of sweet beyond sweet,
Often descending to sour.
On any fair breast she would die in an hour.
Praises she scarce could bear,
Were any wild poet to praise.
Her aim is to rise into light and air.
One of the darlings of Earth, no more,
And little it seems in the dusty ways,
Unless to the grasses nodding beneath;
The bird clapping wings to soar,
The clouds of an evetide's wreath.

YOUTH IN AGE

Once I was part of the music I heard
  On the boughs or sweet between earth and sky,
  For joy of the beating of wings on high
My heart shot into the breast of the bird.

I hear it now and I see it fly
  And a life in wrinkles again is stirred,
  My heart shoots into the breast of the bird,
As it will for sheer love till the last long sigh.

THE LABOURER

For a Heracles in his fighting ire there is never the glory that follows
When ashen he lies and the poets arise to sing of the work he has done.
But to vision alive under shallows of sight, lo, the Labourer's crown is Apollo's,
White stands he yet in his grime and sweat—to wrestle for fruits of the Sun.

Can an enemy wither his cheer? Not you, ye fair yellow-flowering ladies,
Who join with your lords to jar the chords of a bosom heroic, and clog.
'Tis the faltering friend, an inanimate land, may drag a great soul to their Hades,
And plunge him far from a beam of star till he hears the deep bay of the Dog.

Apparition is then of a monster-task, in a policy
carving new fashions:
The winninger course than the rule of force, and
the springs lured to run in a stream:
He would bend tough oak, he would stiffen the reed,
point Reason to swallow the passions,
Bid Britons awake two steps to take where one is
a trouble extreme!

Not the less is he nerved with the Labourer's resolute
hope: that by him shall be written,
To honour his race, this deed of grace, for the
weak from the strong made just:
That her sons over seas in a rally of praise may
behold a thrice vitalised Britain,
Ashine with the light of the doing of right: at the
gates of the Future in trust.

THE YEARS HAD WORN THEIR SEASON'S BELT

The years had worn their season's belt,
From bud to rosy prime,
Since Nellie by the larch-pole knelt
And helped the hop to climb.

Most diligent of teachers then,
But now with all to learn,
She breathed beyond a thought of men,
Though formed to make men burn.

She dwelt where 'twixt low-beaten thorns
Two mill-blades, like a snail,
Enormous, with inquiring horns,
Looked down on half the vale.

You know the grey of dew on grass
Ere with the young sun fired,
And you know well the thirst one has
For the coming and desired.

Quick in our ring she leapt, and gave
  Her hand to left, to right.
No claim on her had any, save
  To feed the joy of sight.

For man and maid a laughing word
  She tossed, in notes as clear
As when the February bird
  Sings out that Spring is near.

Of what befell behind that scene,
  Let none who knows reveal.
In ballad days she might have been
  A heroine rousing steel.

On us did she bestow the hour,
  And fixed it firm in thought;
Her spirit like a meadow flower
  That gives, and asks for nought.

She seemed to make the sunlight stay
  And show her in its pride.
O she was fair as a beech in May
  With the sun on the yonder side.

There was more life than breath can give,
In the looks in her fair form;
For little can we say we live
Until the heart is warm.

FRAGMENTS

Open horizons round,
O mounting mind, to scenes unsung,
Wherein shall walk a lusty Time:
Our Earth is young;
Of measure without bound;
Infinite are the heights to climb,
The depths to sound.

A wilding little stubble flower
The sickle scorned which cut for corn,
Such was our hope in that dark hour
When nought save uses held the street,
And daily pleasures, daily needs,
With barren vision, looked ahead.
And still the same result of seeds
Gave likeness twixt the live and dead.

From labours through the night, outworn,
Above the hills the front of morn
We see, whose eyes to heights are raised,
And the world's wise may deem us crazed.
While yet her lord lies under seas,
She takes us as the wind the trees'
Delighted leafage; all in song
We mount to her, to her belong.

This love of nature, that allures to take
Irregularity for harmony
Of larger scope than our hard measures make,
Cherish it as thy school for when on thee
The ills of life descend.

IL Y A CENT ANS

That march of the funereal Past behold;
How Glory sat on Bondage for its throne;
How men, like dazzled insects, through the mould
Still worked their way, and bled to keep their own.

We know them, as they strove and wrought and yearned;
Their hopes, their fears; what page of Life they wist:
At whiles their vision upon us was turned,
Baffled by shapes limned loosely on thick mist.

Beneath the fortress bulk of Power they bent
Blunt heads, adoring or in shackled hate,
All save the rebel hymned him; and it meant
A world submitting to incarnate Fate.

From this he drew fresh appetite for sway,
And of it fell: whereat was chorus raised,
How surely shall a mad ambition pay
Dues to Humanity, erewhile amazed.

'Twas dreamed by some the deluge would ensue,
So trembling was the tension long constrained;
A spirit of faith was in the chosen few,
That steps to the millennium had been gained.

But mainly the rich business of the hour,
Their sight, made blind by urgency of blood,
Embraced; and facts, the passing sweet or sour,
To them were solid things that nought withstood.

Their facts are going headlong on the tides,
Like commas on a line of History's page;
Nor that which once they took for Truth abides,
Save in the form of youth enlarged from age.

Meantime give ear to woodland notes around,
Look on our Earth full-breasted to our sun:
So was it when their poets heard the sound,
Beheld the scene: in them our days are one.

What figures will be shown the century hence?
What lands intact? We do but know that Power
From piety divorced, though seen immense,
Shall sink on envy of the humblest flower.

IL Y A CENT ANS

Our cry for cradled Peace, while men are still
The three-parts brute which smothers the divine,
Heaven answers: Guard it with forethoughtful will,
Or buy it; all your gains from War resign.

A land, not indefensibly alarmed,
May see, unwarned by hint of friendly gods,
Between a hermit crab at all points armed,
And one without a shell, decisive odds.

OCTOBER 21, 1905

The hundred years have passed, and he
Whose name appeased a nation's fears,
As with a hand laid over sea;
To thunder through the foeman's ears
Defeat before his blast of fire;
Lives in the immortality
That poets dream and noblest souls desire.

Never did nation's need evoke
Hero like him for aid, the while
A Continent was cannon-smoke
Or peace in slavery: this one Isle
Reflecting Nature: this one man
Her sea-hound and her mortal stroke,
With war-worn body aye in battle's van.

And do we love him well, as well
As he his country, we may greet,
With hand on steel, our passing bell
Nigh on the swing, for prelude sweet

To the music heard when his last breath
Hung on its ebb beside the knell,
And Victory in his ear sang gracious Death.

Ah, day of glory! day of tears!
Day of a people bowed as one!
Behold across those hundred years
The lion flash of gun at gun:
Our bitter pride; our love bereaved;
What pall of cloud o'ercame our sun
That day, to bear his wreath, the end achieved.

Joy that no more with murder's frown
The ancient rivals bark apart.
Now Nelson to brave France is shown
A hero after her own heart:
And he now scanning that quick race,
To whom through life his glove was thrown,
Would know a sister spirit to embrace.

TRAFALGAR DAY

He leads: we hear our Seaman's call
  In the roll of battles won;
For he is Britain's Admiral
  Till setting of her sun.

When Britain's life was in her ships,
  He kept the sea as his own right;
And saved us from more fell eclipse
  Than drops on day from blackest night.
Again his battle spat the flame!
  Again his victory flag men saw!
At sound of Nelson's chieftain name,
  A deeper breath did Freedom draw.

Each trusty captain knew his part:
  They served as men, not marshalled kine:
The pulses they of his great heart,
  With heads to work his main design.

Their Nelson's word, to beat the foe,
And spare the fall'n, before them shone.
Good was the hour of blow for blow,
And clear their course while they fought on.

Behold the Envied vanward sweep!—
A day in mourning weeds adored!
Then Victory was wrought to weep;
Then sorrow crowned with laurel soared.
A breezeless flag above a shroud,
All Britain was when wind and wave,
To make her, passing human, proud,
Brought his last gift from o'er the grave!

Uprose the soul of him a star
On that brave day of Ocean days:
It rolled the smoke from Trafalgár
To darken Austerlitz ablaze.
Are we the men of old, its light
Will point us under every sky
The path he took; and must we fight,
Our Nelson be our battle-cry!

He leads: we hear our Seaman's call
In the roll of battles won;
For he is Britain's Admiral
Till setting of her sun.

THE VOYAGE OF THE 'OPHIR'

Men of our race, we send you one
Round whom Victoria's holy name
Is halo from the sunken sun
Of her grand Summer's day aflame.
The heart of your loved Motherland,
To them she loves as her own blood,
This Flower of Ocean bears in hand,
Assured of gift as good.

Forth for our Southern shores the fleet
Which crowns a nation's wisdom steams,
That there may Briton Briton greet,
And stamp as fact Imperial dreams.
Across the globe, from sea to sea,
The long smoke-pennon trails above,
Writes over sky how wise will be
The Power that trusts to love.

A love that springs from heart and brain
In union gives for ripest fruit
The concord Kings and States in vain
Have sought, who played the lofty brute,
And fondly deeming they possessed,
On force relied, and found it break:
That truth once scored on Britain's breast,
Now keeps her mind awake.

Australian, Canadian,
To tone old veins with streams of youth,
Our trust be on the best in man
Henceforth, and we shall prove that truth.
Prove to a world of brows down-bent
That in the Britain thus endowed,
Imperial means beneficent,
And strength to service vowed.

IRELAND

Fire in her ashes Ireland feels
And in her veins a glow of heat.
To her the lost old time appeals
For resurrection, good to greet:
Not as a shape with spectral eyes,
But humanly maternal, young
In all that quickens pride, and wise
To speak the best her bards have sung.

You read her as a land distraught,
Where bitterest rebel passions seethe.
Look with a core of heart in thought,
For so is known the truth beneath.
She came to you a loathing bride,
And it has been no happy bed.
Believe in her as friend, allied
By bonds as close as those who wed.

Her speech is held for hatred's cry;
Her silence tells of treason hid:
Were it her aim to burst the tie,
She sees what iron laws forbid.
Excess of heart obscures from view
A head as keen as yours to count.
Trust her, that she may prove her true
In links whereof is love the fount.

May she not call herself her own?
That is her cry, and thence her spits
Of fury, thence her graceless tone
At justice given in bits and bits.
The limbs once raw with gnawing chains
Will fret at silken when God's beams
Of Freedom beckon o'er the plains
From mounts that show it more than dreams.

She, generous, craves your generous dole;
That will not rouse the crack of doom.
It ends the blundering past control
Simply to give her elbow-room.
Her offspring feel they are a race,
To be a nation is their claim;

Yet stronger bound in your embrace
Than when the tie was but a name.

A nation she, and formed to charm,
With heart for heart and hands all round.
No longer England's broken arm,
Would England know where strength is found.
And strength to-day is England's need;
To-morrow it may be for both
Salvation: heed the portents, heed
The warnings; free the mind from sloth.

Too long the pair have danced in mud,
With no advance from sun to sun.
Ah, what a bounding course of blood
Has England with an Ireland one!
Behold yon shadow cross the downs,
And off away to yeasty seas.
Lightly will fly old rancour's frowns
When solid with high heart stand these.

THE CALL

Under what spell are we debased
By fears for our inviolate Isle,
Whose record is of dangers faced
And flung to heel with even smile?
Is it a vaster force, a subtler guile?

They say Exercitus designs
To match the famed Salsipotent
Where on her sceptre she reclines;
Awake: but were a slumber sent
By guilty gods, more fell his foul intent.

The subtler web, the vaster foe,
Well may we meet when drilled for deeds:
But in these days of wealth at flow,
A word of breezy warning breeds
The pained responses seen in lakeside reeds.

THE CALL

We fain would stand contemplative,
All innocent as meadow grass;
In human goodness fain believe,
Believe a cloud is formed to pass;
Its shadows chase with draughts of hippocras.

Others have gone; the way they went
Sweet sunny now, and safe our nest.
Humanity, enlightenment,
Against the warning hum protest:
Let the world hear that we know what is best.

So do the beatific speak;
Yet have they ears, and eyes as well;
And if not with a paler cheek,
They feel the shivers in them dwell,
That something of a dubious future tell.

For huge possessions render slack
The power we need to hold them fast;
Save when a quickened heart shall make
Our people one, to meet what blast
May blow from temporal heavens overcast.

Our people one! Nor they with strength
Dependent on a single arm:
Alert, and braced the whole land's length,
Rejoicing in their manhood's charm
For friend or foe; to succour, not to harm.

Has ever weakness won esteem?
Or counts it as a prized ally?
They who have read in History deem
It ranks among the slavish fry,
Whose claim to live justiciary Fates deny.

It can not be declared we are
A nation till from end to end
The land can show such front to war
As bids a crouching foe expend
His ire in air, and preferably be friend.

We dreading him, we do him wrong;
For fears discolour, fears invite.
Like him, our task is to be strong;
Unlike him, claiming not by might
To snatch an envied treasure as a right.

So may a stouter brotherhood
At home be signalled over sea
For righteous, and be understood,
Nay, welcomed, when 'tis shown that we
All duties have embraced in being free.

This Britain slumbering, she is rich;
Lies placid as a cradled child;
At times with an uneasy twitch,
That tells of dreams unduly wild.
Shall she be with a foreign drug defiled?

The grandeur of her deeds recall;
Look on her face so kindly fair:
This Britain! and were she to fall,
Mankind would breathe a harsher air,
The nations miss a light of leading rare.

THE CRISIS

Spirit of Russia, now has come
The day when thou canst not be dumb.
Around thee foams the torrent tide,
Above thee its fell fountain, Pride.
The senseless rock awaits thy word
To crumble; shall it be unheard?
Already, like a tempest-sun,
That shoots the flare and shuts to dun,
Thy land 'twixt flame and darkness heaves,
Showing the blade wherewith Fate cleaves,
If mortals in high courage fail
At the one breath before the gale.
Those rulers in all forms of lust,
Who trod thy children down to dust
On the red Sunday, know right well
What word for them thy voice would spell,
What quick perdition for them weave,
Did they in such a voice believe.

Not thine to raise the avenger's shriek,
Nor turn to them a Tolstoi cheek;
Nor menace him, the waverer still,
Man of much heart and little will,
The criminal of his high seat,
Whose plea of Guiltless judges it.
For him thy voice shall bring to hand
Salvation, and to thy torn land,
Seen on the breakers. Now has come
The day when thou canst not be dumb,
Spirit of Russia:—those who bind
Thy limbs and iron-cap thy mind,
Take thee for quaking flesh, misdoubt
That thou art of the rabble rout
Which cries and flees, with whimpering lip,
From reckless gun and brutal whip;
But he who has at heart the deeds
Of thy heroic offspring reads
In them a soul; not given to shrink
From peril on the abyss's brink;
With never dread of murderous power;
With view beyond the crimson hour;
Neither an instinct-driven might,
Nor visionary erudite;

A soul; that art thou. It remains
For thee to stay thy children's veins,
The countertides of hate arrest,
Give to thy sons a breathing breast,
And Him resembling, in His sight,
Say to thy land, Let there be Light.

THE WARNING

We have seen mighty men ballooning high,
And in another moment bump the ground.
He falls; and in his measurement is found
To count some inches o'er the common fry.
'Twas not enough to send him climbing sky,
Yet 'twas enough above his fellows crowned,
Had he less panted. Let his faithful hound
Bark at detractors. He may walk or lie.
Concerns it most ourselves, who with our gas—
This little Isle's insatiable greed
For Continents—filled to inflation burst.
So do ripe nations into squalor pass,
When, driven as herds by their old private thirst,
They scorn the brain's wild search for virtuous light.

OUTSIDE THE CROWD

To sit on History in an easy chair,
Still rivalling the wild hordes by whom 'twas writ!
Sure, this beseems a race of laggard wit,
Unwarned by those plain letters scrawled on air.
If more than hands' and armsful be our share,
Snatch we for substance we see vapours flit.
Have we not heard derision infinite
When old men play the youth to chase the snare?
Let us be belted athletes, matched for foes,
Or stand aloof, the great Benevolent,
The Lord of Lands no Robber-birds annex,
Where Justice holds the scales with pure intent;
Armed to support her sword;—lest we compose
That Chapter for the historic word on Wrecks.

'ATKINS'

Yonder 's the man with his life in his hand,
Legs on the march for whatever the land,
  Or to the slaughter, or to the maiming,
    Getting the dole of a dog for pay.
Laurels he clasps in the words 'duty done,'
England his heart under every sun:—
  Exquisite humour! that gives him a naming
    Base to the ear as an ass's bray.

THE CENTENARY OF GARIBALDI

We who have seen Italia in the throes,
Half risen but to be hurled to ground, and now
Like a ripe field of wheat where once drove plough
All bounteous as she is fair, we think of those
Who blew the breath of life into her frame:
Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi: Three:
Her Brain, her Soul, her Sword; and set her free
From ruinous discords, with one lustrous aim.

That aim, albeit they were of minds diverse,
Conjoined them, not to strive without surcease;
For them could be no babblement of peace
While lay their country under Slavery's curse.

The set of torn Italia's glorious day
Was ever sunrise in each filial breast.
Of eagle beaks by righteousness unblest
They felt her pulsing body made the prey.

Wherefore they struck, and had to count their dead.
With bitter smile of resolution nerved
To try new issues, holding faith unswerved,
Promise they gathered from the rich blood shed.

In them Italia, visible to us then
As living, rose; for proof that huge brute Force
Has never being from celestial source,
And is the lord of cravens, not of men.

Now breaking up the crust of temporal strife,
Who reads their acts enshrined in History, sees
That Tyrants were the Revolutionaries,
The Rebels men heart-vowed to hallowed life.

Pure as the Archangel's cleaving Darkness thro',
The Sword he sees, the keen unwearied Sword,
A single blade against a circling horde,
And aye for Freedom and the trampled few.

The cry of Liberty from dungeon cell,
From exile, was his God's command to smite,
As for a swim in sea he joined the fight,
With radiant face, full sure that he did well.

Behold a warrior dealing mortal strokes,
Whose nature was a child's: amid his foes
A wary trickster: at the battle's close,
No gentler friend this leopard dashed with fox.

Down the long roll of History will run
The story of these deeds, and speed his race
Beneath defeat more hotly to embrace
The noble cause and trust to another sun.

And lo, that sun is in Italia's skies
This day, by grace of his good sword in part.
It beckons her to keep a warrior heart
For guard of beauty, all too sweet a prize.

Earth gave him: blessèd be the Earth that gave.
Earth's Master crowned his honest work on earth:
Proudly Italia names his place of birth:
The bosom of Humanity his grave.

MILTON

DECEMBER 9, 1608 : DECEMBER 9, 1908

What splendour of imperial station man,
The Tree of Life, may reach when, rooted fast,
His branching stem points way to upper air
And skyward still aspires, we see in him
Who sang for us the Archangelical host,
Made Morning, by old Darkness urged to the abyss;
A voice that down three centuries onward rolls;
Onward will roll while lives our English tongue,
In the devout of music unsurpassed
Since Piety won Heaven's ear on Israel's harp.

The face of Earth, the soul of Earth, her charm,
Her dread austerity; the quavering fate
Of mortals with blind hope by passion swayed,
His mind embraced, the while on trodden soil,
Defender of the Commonwealth, he joined
Our temporal fray, whereof is vital fruit,

And, choosing armoury of the Scholar, stood
Beside his peers to raise the voice for Freedom:
Nor has fair Liberty a champion armed
To meet on heights or plains the Sophister
Throughout the ages, equal to this man,
Whose spirit breathed high Heaven, and drew thence
The ethereal sword to smite.

Were England sunk
Beneath the shifting tides, her heart, her brain,
The smile she wears, the faith she holds, her best,
Would live full-toned in the grand delivery
Of his cathedral speech: an utterance
Almost divine, and such as Hellespont,
Crashing its breakers under Ida's frown,
Inspired: yet worthier he, whose instrument
Was by comparison the coarse reed-pipe;
Whereof have come the marvellous harmonies,
Which, with his lofty theme, of infinite range,
Abash, entrance, exalt.

We need him now,
This latest Age in repetition cries:
For Belial, the adroit, is in our midst;

Mammon, more swoln to squeeze the slavish sweat
From hopeless toil: and overshadowingly
(Aggrandized, monstrous in his grinning mask
Of hypocritical Peace,) inveterate Moloch
Remains the great example.

Homage to him
His debtor band, innumerable as waves
Running all golden from an eastern sun,
Joyfully render, in deep reverence
Subscribe, and as they speak their Milton's name,
Rays of his glory on their foreheads bear.

ANGELA BURDETT-COUTTS

Long with us, now she leaves us; she has rest
  Beneath our sacred sod:
A woman vowed to Good, whom all attest,
  The daylight gift of God.

EPITAPH

ON THE TOMBSTONE OF

JAMES CHRISTOPHER WILSON

(d. APRIL 11 1884)

IN HEADLEY CHURCHYARD, SURREY

Thou our beloved and light of Earth hast crossed
The sea of darkness to the yonder shore.
There dost thou shine a light transferred, not lost,
Through love to kindle in our souls the more.

AT THE FUNERAL

FEBRUARY 2, 1901

Her sacred body bear: the tenement
Of that strong soul now ranked with God's Elect.
Her heart upon her people's heart she spent;
Hence is she Royalty's lodestar to direct.

The peace is hers, of whom all lands have praised
Majestic virtues ere her day unseen.
Aloft the name of Womanhood she raised,
And gave new readings to the Title, Queen.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

SONG [1]

Should thy love die;
O bury it not under ice-blue eyes!
And lips that deny,
With a scornful surprise,
The life it once lived in thy breast when it wore no disguise.

Should thy love die;
O bury it where the sweet wild-flowers blow!
And breezes go by,
With no whisper of woe;
And strange feet cannot guess of the anguish that slumbers below.

Should thy love die;
O wander once more to the haunt of the bee!
Where the foliaged sky,
Is most sacred to see,
And thy being first felt its wild birk like a wind-wakened tree.

[1] Originally printed in 'Poems,' 1851.

Should thy love die;
O dissemble it! smile! let the rose hide the thorn!
While the lark sings on high,
And no thing looks forlorn,
Bury it, bury it, bury it where it was born.

CHILLIANWALLAH[1]

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
Where our brothers fought and bled
O thy name is natural music
And a dirge above the dead!
Though we have not been defeated,
Though we can't be overcome,
Still, whene'er thou art repeated,
I would fain that grief were dumb.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
'Tis a name so sad and strange,
Like a breeze through midnight harpstrings
Ringing many a mournful change;
But the wildness and the sorrow
Have a meaning of their own—
Oh, whereof no glad to-morrow
Can relieve the dismal tone!

[1] First contributed to a MS. magazine, 'The Monthly Observer,' in the year 1849; first printed in 'Chambers' Edinburgh Journal,' July 7, 1849.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
'Tis a village dark and low,
By the bloody Jhelum river,
Bridged by the foreboding foe;
And across the wintry water
He is ready to retreat,
When the carnage and the slaughter
Shall have paid for his defeat.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
'Tis a wild and dreary plain,
Strewn with plots of thickest jungle,
Matted with the gory stain.
There the murder-mouthed artillery,
In the deadly ambuscade,
Wrought the thunder of its treachery
On the skeleton brigade.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
When the night set in with rain,
Came the savage plundering devils
To their work among the slain;

CHILLIANWALLAH

And the wounded and the dying
In cold blood did share the doom
Of their comrades round them lying,
Stiff in the dead skyless gloom.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!
Thou wilt be a doleful chord,
And a mystic note of mourning
That will need no chiming word;
And that heart will leap with anguish
Who may understand thee best;
But the hopes of all will languish
Till thy memory is at rest.

TO ALEX. SMITH, THE 'GLASGOW POET,'[1]

ON HIS SONNET TO 'FAME'

Not vainly doth the earnest voice of man
Call for the thing that is his pure desire!
Fame is the birthright of the living lyre!
To noble impulse Nature puts no ban.
Nor vainly to the Sphinx thy voice was raised!
Tho' all thy great emotions like a sea,
Against her stony immortality,
Shatter themselves unheeded and amazed.
Time moves behind her in a blind eclipse:
Yet if in her cold eyes the end of all
Be visible, as on her large closed lips
Hangs dumb the awful riddle of the earth;—
She sees, and she might speak, since that wild call,
The mighty warning of a Poet's birth.

[1] 'The Leader,' December 20, 1851.

THE PATRIOT ENGINEER

33—R

THE PATRIOT ENGINEER[1]

'Sirs! may I shake your hands?
My countrymen, I see!
I've lived in foreign lands
Till England's Heaven to me.
A hearty shake will do me good,
And freshen up my sluggish blood.'

Into his hard right hand we struck,
Gave the shake, and wish'd him luck.

'—From Austria I come,
An English wife to win,
And find an English home,
And live and die therein.
Great Lord! how many a year I've pined
To drink old ale and speak my mind!'

Loud rang our laughter, and the shout
Hills round the Meuse-boat echoed about.

[1] 'Once a Week,' December 14, 1861.

'—Ay, no offence: laugh on,
Young gentlemen: I'll join.
Had you to exile gone,
Where free speech is base coin,
You'd sigh to see the jolly nose
Where Freedom's native liquor flows!'

He this time the laughter led,
Dabbling his oily bullet head.

'—Give me, to suit my moods,
An ale-house on a heath,
I'll hand the crags and woods
To B'elzebub beneath.
A fig for scenery! what scene
Can beat a Jackass on a green?'

Gravely he seem'd with gaze intense,
Putting the question to common sense.

'—Why, there's the ale-house bench:
The furze-flower shining round:
And there's my waiting-wench,
As lissome as a hound.

With "hail Britannia!" ere I drink,
I'll kiss her with an artful wink.'

Fair flash'd the foreign landscape while
We breath'd again our native Isle.

'—The geese may swim hard-by;
They gabble, and you talk:
You're sure there's not a spy
To mark your name with chalk.
My heart's an oak, and it won't grow
In flower-pots, foreigners must know.'

Pensive he stood: then shook his head
Sadly; held out his fist, and said:

'—You've heard that Hungary's floor'd?
They've got her on the ground.
A traitor broke her sword:
Two despots held her bound.
I've seen her gasping her last hope:
I've seen her sons strung up b' the rope.

'Nine gallant gentlemen
In Arad they strung up!
I work'd in peace till then:—
That poison'd all my cup.
A smell of corpses haunted me:
My nostril sniff'd like life for sea.

'Take money for my hire
From butchers?—not the man!
I've got some natural fire,
And don't flash in the pan;—
A few ideas I reveal'd:—
'Twas well old England stood my shield!

'Said I, "The Lord of Hosts
Have mercy on your land!
I see those dangling ghosts,—
And you may keep command,
And hang, and shoot, and have your day:
They hold your bill, and you must pay.

'"You 've sent them where they 're strong,
You carrion Double-Head!
I hear them sound a gong
In Heaven above!"—I said.

"My God, what feathers won't you moult
For this!" says I: and then I bolt.

'The Bird 's a beastly Bird,
And what is more, a fool.
I shake hands with the herd
That flock beneath his rule.
They 're kindly; and their land is fine.
I thought it rarer once than mine.

'And rare would be its lot,
But that he baulks its powers:
It 's just an earthen pot
For hearts of oak like ours.
Think! Think!—four days from those frontiers,
And I 'm a-head full fifty years.

'It tingles to your scalps,
To think of it, my boys!
Confusion on their Alps,
And all their baby toys!
The mountains Britain boasts are men:
And scale you them, my brethren!'

Cluck, went his tongue; his fingers, snap.
Britons were proved all heights to cap.

And we who worshipp'd crags,
Where purple splendours burn'd,
Our idol saw in rags,
And right about were turn'd.
Horizons rich with trembling spires
On violet twilights lost their fires.

And heights where morning wakes
With one cheek over snow;—
And iron-wallèd lakes
Where sits the white moon low;—
For us on youthful travel bent,
The robing picturesque was rent.

Wherever Beauty show'd
The wonders of her face,
This man his Jackass rode,
High despot of the place.
Fair dreams of our enchanted life,
Fled fast from his shrill island fife.

THE PATRIOT ENGINEER

And yet we liked him well;
We laugh'd with honest hearts:—
He shock'd some inner spell,
And rous'd discordant parts.
We echoed what we half abjured:
And hating, smilingly endured.

Moreover, could we be
To our dear land disloyal?
And were not also we
Of History's blood-Royal?
We glow'd to think how donkeys graze
In England, thrilling at their brays.

For there a man may view
An aspect more sublime
Than Alps against the blue:—
The morning eyes of Time!
The very Ass participates
The glory Freedom radiates!

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IV

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